UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CONSIDERING AND (RE)CONSIDERING:
PRIOR KNOWING AND NEW LEARNING
IN THE PROFESSIONAL YEAR OF TEACHER EDUCATION

BY

NANCY LOUISE EVANS ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Joyce Bainbridge per
P. Ver Velde

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for Erin Christine and Amy Caitlin
who took this journey with me

ABSTRACT

A constructivist view of learning posits that meaning is actively constructed according to what one already knows. This research study examined the ongoing integration of prior knowing and current learning as experienced by six participants, professional year elementary education students. The research was conducted in the contexts of a full year language arts methodology course, a seven week final student teaching practicum, and a post-teacher certification interview.

Data sources included twice weekly journal entries written at the conclusion of each language arts methods lecture, daily log entries written during practicum teaching, fieldnotes based on practicum teaching observations, audio taped discussions following practicum teaching observations, and a final interview thirteen months following completion of the professional year in the education program.

Data collection and analysis were guided by a naturalistic inquiry paradigm (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), the use of qualitative methodology (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) and participant observation (Spradley, 1980). Coded data revealed five themes which guided the participants' professional year experiences in the teacher education program. Current learning was integrated with prior knowing through the participants' considerations of prior experiences, self as learner, anticipation and reality of the practicum, significant others, and the future as a teacher.

The perceptions of reflective writing assigned during the professional year were explored from the vantage points of the participants and of the teacher educator. Three factors which impeded reflection were identified as overuse of journal writing assignments, reflection on demand, and reflection in isolation.

The study concludes with implications, framed in a constructivist perspective, regarding the following three aspects of the professional year in teacher education: reflection in the teacher education program; methodology instruction; and the practicum experience.

Further connected research topics are related to a naturalistic inquiry paradigm with the intent of enhancing the efficacy of the professional year in teacher education. The nature of reflection merits further investigation, including time set aside for peer and group interactions. Practicum relationships, in particular sponsor teacher and student teacher compatibility, are suggested as an area for further investigation.

A postscript details the participants' involvements in further education studies and in teaching in the year following their teacher certification.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

> Those elements of experience that are observable and measurable tend to be rather small and specific. The firmament in the positivist sky twinkles with precision and rigor. However, the spaces between stars and those hidden by clouds recede and disappear...the unity of the epistemological whole resides in ourselves. (Pinar, 1992, pp. 2-3)

Introduction

My twenty-five year journey along the continuum from undergraduate education student to teacher educator has encompassed the roles of elementary classroom teacher, learning assistance teacher, mother of two daughters, learning disabilities specialist, sessional instructor, doctoral student, and professor, and has spanned three faculties of education and two provinces. My research interest reflects a deep commitment to teacher education and to teaching thoughtfully informed language arts methodology to future elementary classroom teachers.

My own memories of being an undergraduate education student are a blur of foundations courses, methodology courses and student teaching. At university my peers and I were, at first consideration, unremarkable in our homogeneity. We were, as a group of future teachers, for the most part single, female, living at home or in residence if from out of town, and progressing from year to year in an age appropriate progression--eighteen years old in first year, nineteen years old in second year and so on. Only two exceptions stand out in my mind. George had switched into the education program after two years in arts and lived in married student quarters. Pat, in her thirties, was a single mother of four young children.

My undergraduate language arts methods course focused on the central role of the basal reader, the importance of faithfully following the accompanying teacher's manual and grouping students on the basis of standardized tests. Twenty five years ago, my first class of third graders lent themselves willingly to the application of my language arts methods course directives. A standardized reading test was administered, three ability groups formed and named and we began, at rates deemed appropriate by the teacher's guide, to proceed through the grade three reader. The Eagles, Hawks and Bluebirds were, in turn, introduced to new vocabulary, instructed to read aloud with expression and assigned accompanying workbook pages. The Eagles, labeled as high ability, were assigned additional enrichment activities. A provincially approved basal reading series was thought, by the school's administration, to be the authoritative, and ultimate key to producing students who could read. Teacher tampering with the agenda of a basal reading series was unthinkable, undesirable and not to be considered by a novice teacher. The beginning of my teaching career coincided with the heyday of 'teacher-proof' materials.

Mayher (1990) captures my experience as an education student and novice teacher when he writes:

> Once upon a time, teachers and teacher educators could complacently regard their task as being straightforward. There was expert knowledge to be transmitted to the less knowledgeable: specific knowledge of content and skills to the young; another body of content and techniques to preservice and inservice teachers . . . but the fundamental transmission model has remained relatively unchanged since the demise of progressive education. (p. xiii)

An appointment to the position of learning assistance teacher heightened my awareness of the need for self-esteem in learning, the powerful and undermining practice of labelling children, and the anxiety of the child, and family, deemed a failure by early school experiences. The perpetuation of a teacher proof view of student learning was evidenced in the prescriptive formula designed by the consulting psychologist and prominently featured programmed learning and decontextualized drills. As the learning assistance teacher, it was my role to translate the psychologist's recommendations into an individual program for each student during their scheduled times in my learning assistance classroom. Standardized tests determined and chronicled their entry to, and exit from, the learning assistance classroom. The offerings of a burgeoning educational technology industry were additionally thought to offer an 'answer' to heightening the motivation of those deemed underachievers. Most memorable was the Language Master which presented isolated sight words on flashcards while the machine 'read' the word in a disembodied voice. The student then repeated the word as spoken by the 'voice'. The boldest and likely most imaginative student seized this opportunity to record swear words. I learned that students, regardless of age, have their own agendas and their own ways of coping. The individualized attention of a caring, informed teacher, I recognized from my experience, was the crucial factor in a prescriptive remedial program.

My career as a learning assistance teacher continued, in a new city, and the multitude of available remedial materials grew. Matching the student with the 'right' combination of teaching to identified weaknesses was the well intended goal. SRA kits, Finding the Main Idea (booklets A through F), Dolch sight word drills and sentence dictation are materials and processes that first come to mind as I recall the learning assistance clinical environment. Looking back now, from the vantage point of time, experience and research, it is easy to be critical of these earlier attempts to assist children in their learning. The anticipated transference of skills to regular classroom work was not automatic and there were only limited attempts to coordinate the remedial program with the classroom teacher. But, infinitely more important than prescriptive testing and programmed materials, were the caring, the opportunities to know the student as an individual learner, the genuine concern for the child, and the mutual building of a trusting, interpersonal relationship between teacher and learner that made this such a humane and successful venture.

Years later, my first university teaching assignment in a faculty of education consisted of three classes of thirty-five professional year students. I was to teach the language arts methods course.

Based on my prior knowing, my initial expectations as a sessional instructor of language arts methodology left me astounded at the heterogeneous mix of students. Gone were the homogeneous classes of my undergraduate days as an education student. These students represented a myriad of diverse life experiences: First Nations, immigrants, parents, single parents, grandparents, physically challenged, students only three years past high school and those with previous degrees and/or other careers. Where was I to begin? Based on my own prior knowing, and a frantic feeling of having to keep one step ahead of the students, I taught the language arts content with overuse of lecture notes and overuse of the overhead projector. My own beliefs, my prior knowing based on classroom and clinical practice regarding the primacy of the student's relevant life experiences in the light of new learning, were set aside to meet the agenda of a hurried professional year.

Looking back on this early university teaching experience, I now realize that I had succumbed to what Bollnow (1979) has likened to a sculptor metaphor--forming my 'student material'--so that they would be prepared for their first round of student teaching precisely ten weeks after our initial encounter. Thirty-five students per class scribbled furiously, seemed to devour everything I had to say, although in the end there were those who still made reference to a 'basil' reader and those who admitted that they had always, and still, 'hated' reading. By the end of the academic year, I had an uneasy feeling that while I had conscientiously delivered the curricular content, the curriculum-as-planned (Aoki, 1993), I had somehow overlooked the curriculum-as-lived. My early experiences have been reflected back to me numerous times in conversations with colleagues. One peer shared, "I used to believe, when I began teaching student teachers, that my main and only task was to state the course content within the allotted class time." Carter (1990) summarizes my feelings at the time, and speaks to prior knowing, when she writes:

> For the most part, attention in teacher education has traditionally been focused on what teachers need to know and how they can be trained, rather than on what they actually know or how that knowledge is acquired. The perspective, in other words, has been from the outside, external to the teachers who are learning and the processes by which they are educated (p. 291).

Clark (1988) concurs and questions "Do we give due consideration to the implicit theories and preconceptions of teaching that our students bring to the education classrooms?" (p. 7).

In the past, I taught my education students with the notion that good instruction, on my part, was entirely dependent upon my fidelity to the curriculum as planned, an unwavering adherence to the language arts department's course outline. I came to expect a recurrence, a conformity, in each of the language arts methods classes I taught. Unknowingly, and certainly unintentionally, I was indifferent to, did not make time or room for, the prior knowing of the students in my classes. What were the sources of my own prior knowing? Tardif's (1985) study investigated the beliefs of four student teachers and led to her conclusion that "as we are taught, so do we teach" (p. 85). This is mirrored in Schmier's (1995) recall of teaching his first class of university students. He writes, "We learned on the job, without guidance, by the seat of our pants, more often than not by aping our [previous] lecturing professors" (p.12).

What is involved in considering my students' prior knowing in relation to the teaching of language arts in the elementary classroom and to supervising them as student teachers during their final seven week practicum? In reconsidering my own evolution as a teacher educator, it becomes apparent that I have gradually moved away from an 'I' emphasis: 'How can I best transmit my knowledge of the curriculum, of the classroom?' This has been replaced by an 'I and others' orientation. How can I, as a teacher educator, acknowledge my students' prior knowing and encourage them to meaningfully connect their prior knowing to the new learning in a language arts methodology course, the seven week practicum experience and, ultimately, as certified teachers?

What specific prior knowing enhanced or detracted from how the students engaged in and responded to the process and content of the professional year language arts methodology course and the practicum experience? How could I develop a more individualized, personalized relationship with each student in an attempt to explore how they made connections and constructed meaning on the basis of their own prior knowing? Would my insights make a difference?

Instruction in an elementary language arts methods course could potentially be enhanced by modifying the "conduit" metaphor of learning (Tobin and Jakubowski, 1992, p. 167) and considering the powerful influences that a student's prior knowing about language arts and classroom teaching exert in the methods course and practicum teaching situations. It has been my experience, though, that little heed is paid to acknowledging and considering the qualities of education students' prior knowing and its place in the process of becoming a teacher.

Considering and (Re)considering

What does it mean to consider my students' prior knowing? One definition of consider reads "to think about or deliberate upon; examine mentally; weigh; to take into account; have regard for; to think well of; regard highly" (Avis,1978, p. 288). This definition reflects my expectations for myself as a teacher educator in my interactions with the students in my classes.

The definition also lists five synonyms for consider: examine, study, ponder, reflect and meditate. As education students participate in course work and practicum teaching, the expectation is that they will consider current learning, not just in the immediate moment, and reflect on how it fits with their existing prior knowing.

The word consider is rooted in the Latin *com*--thoroughly--plus *sideris*--star--, referring to astrology. Can we thoroughly ponder the stars? Pinar's (1992) reference to the spaces between stars describes my seeking to understand and name those elusive spaces, and speaks to the notion of considering. The addition of the Latin prefix *re-*, --back; again; anew; again and again,--illuminates the complexity of the task of not merely considering, but (re)considering.

Exploring Potential Data

Since the beginning of my second year of teaching language arts methodology to preservice teachers, I have incorporated daily journal writing procedures as an extension of my interest in the bridging of my students' prior knowing to their professional year experiences. The underlying intent has been to give my students the message that their individual life experiences are valid, relevant and form the foundations of beliefs, knowledge and questions that they bring to teacher education. Over the years, I have experimented with the journal writing format and have variously incorporated assigned topics, freewriting, peer feedback, instructor response, writing during class time, writing outside of class, writing at the beginning of class and writing at the end of class.

By the conclusion of each of the language arts methods courses, journal entries written by my students represented a vast body of data which documented their professional year transitions from students to certified teachers. These journals informed me with respect to relevant issues as a language arts methods instructor and as a teacher educator. One of the students in my classes reminded me that childhood experiences have a lasting effect on our present construction of meaning, in this instance, an awareness, a sensitivity to cultural and linguistic differences:

> I grew up in a household where English (as a primary tongue) eventually replaced the Low-German dialect which my parents and grandparents spoke. The change was initiated by my older sister, J., who came home from

> her first day of grade one and announced, red-eyed and stone-faced, that under no circumstances would she speak German again. She then took it upon herself to read aloud to me, each and every evening, anything in English. What I don't remember is whether or not the going was tough for J. Unlike J., I still understand Low-German when I hear it, and I still speak it quite well. I like the quips and idioms which "don't translate" into English worth a hoot. Low-German is an added dimension for me, but then I didn't have to wear this part of my heritage like a millstone. (language arts journal entry by R., September, 1993)

In my attempts to connect my own experiential background and ongoing learning to the language arts classes, I often used personal examples based on my own children's home and school experiences. Students' journal entries reflected their own connections:

> I enjoy the stories about your girls. It is important to re-tell these stories as they are so easily forgotten. I wish I could remember more from my own children who are now 18 and 21. I am glad, however, that I saved their written work during their school years. (language arts journal entry by D., September, 1993)

> The discussions on emergent literacy are really interesting. I'm disappointed that I didn't save enough of my own children's work. As we go through this emergent writing, I can see the stages my own children are at. (language arts journal entry by L., September, 1993).

Topics discussed in class frequently provoked students to weigh new learnings in the light of prior knowing:

> Today I was reminded of a book I bought my children many years ago. It was a wordless picture book about an expedition to an island. The island was the home of a giant and very gentle ape--paralleling the story of King Kong. What struck me--in our conversation about 'child centered teaching' was an injustice I had done. My daughter tried to write words in the book and, seeing her enthusiasm, I wanted to have a 'correct' copy. I took her words and ideas, erased her writing, and together we constructed a 'perfect' story--her ideas and my perfect handwriting and spelling. Today I had an overwhelming need to see her 'perfect' little words on those pages. It is so sad--what we do to our children--through our ignorance. Thank goodness we learn! (language arts journal entry by I., October 23, 1992)

At the conclusion of each language arts methods course, I have described my research interest to the students and requested that they leave their journals with me over the summer months, if they chose to do so. A majority of my students did and their writing represented a large body of prior knowing, considerations and connections concerning both the language arts course and teacher education. Permission to photocopy segments of their journals was obtained at this time.

As well, my practicum supervision experiences, over the years, have provided varied opportunities for field observations in the form of both written feedback to, and related discussions with, the student teachers. These data, in addition to the language arts journals and post program interviews, promised a wealth of information about the professional year experience, worthy of thematic analysis.

I became interested in exploring the phenomena of prior knowing and new learning in the professional year experience, using a small number of students and following them from our initial meeting in the language arts methodology class, through a final seven week student teaching practicum and interviewing them during the year following their graduation from the teacher education program.

The Purpose of the Study

The study afforded an opportunity to investigate the influence of each participant's integration of prior knowing and new understandings in two situations: as a language arts methods student and as a student teacher. As well, participants were interviewed one year after the completion of the program when they were certified teachers.

The six professional year education students participated in a fourth year language arts methodology course, a seven week final practicum in an elementary classroom, and a post teacher certification interview. Their written reflections and practicum teaching experiences were documented and analyzed for instances of prior knowing as it transacted with professional year learning. This study attempts to illuminate the education student-to-certified teacher process, as it grows and unfolds, over the course of the professional year.

Research Questions

The central questions of this study are:

1. What aspects of the participant's prior knowing are considered to be personally relevant as learning in a language arts methods class takes place?
2. What aspects of the participant's prior knowing are considered to be personally relevant during a final practicum?
3. How can professional year instruction encourage education students to connect current learning with their prior knowing?
4. What commonalities and differences exist among the prior knowing, new learning, and considerations, of the six participants?

Significance of the Study

The progression from education student to student teacher to certified teacher represents a path of development common to the majority of elementary education students. The significance of this study is that it presents an opportunity to derive an understanding of the influence of the prior knowing of education students in their experience of the professional year, and how this knowing is manifested in the ongoing construction of knowledge in two diverse settings, a language arts methods class and the practicum classroom. By critically scrutinizing a variety of sources of data--language arts journals, student teaching logbooks, practicum observation notes, audio taped discussions following student teaching observations, and post certification interviews--opportunities will exist for me to explore the relevance and ongoing integration of prior knowing and new learning during the professional year experience, and beyond.

The interplay of prior knowing and new understandings takes place in each methodology course and is subsequently put into practice within the context of practicum teaching. The information from this study contributes to the pedagogical awareness of methods instructors, regardless of the specific content area taught. It encourages both an acknowledgement and valuing of the prior knowing students bring to the education program courses. In agreement with Clark (1988), it serves to encourage "teacher educators to take the risky and exciting step of systematically studying their own practices" (p. 7). Carson (1991), acknowledging the current popularity of the phrase "reflective practice", advises that "to promote reflection in the education of teachers, we will need to be more reflective of ourselves as teacher educators" (pp. 1-2). An ongoing significant feature of this study is to seek a greater understanding of where I am, as a teacher educator, and to utilize the findings to improve my own practice.

Limitations of the Study

My multiple roles as instructor, supervisor and researcher cannot totally discount the possibility that the data collected might be influenced by the participants' perceptions of my changing roles during their professional year.

Aoki (1991) writes of dwelling in the flux as a way of being, a gentle letting be. Because there are many ways of being, the research which is carried out will not result in universal truths or generalizations, nor can it be replicated in the positivistic sense. Rather, the focus will center on my openness to what the participants choose to share through their language arts journal entries, their actual classroom teaching experiences, student teaching log reflections and during an interview following their graduation from the education program. The resulting multiplicity of meanings will be of the utmost importance. The individual way(s) in which each participant creates meaning based on their prior knowing will limit generalization.

Rather than viewing such inquiry in terms of its limitations, though, Aoki (1991b) celebrates this openness on the part of the researcher "in terms of living in the middle--living in the midst of ongoing life that is ever open to possibilities" (p.2). Similarly, Pinar (1992) makes reference to the importance of inquiry into elusive phenomena, naming it as "the spaces between stars and those hidden by clouds that recede and disappear" (p. 2).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature related to the central intent of this study illuminates four key areas for consideration. The initial focus of the literature review examines the nature of the prior knowing that education students bring to a teacher education program. Secondly, an exploration of the literature centers upon a constructivist perspective of learning, which asserts that the learner actively constructs meaning according to what one already knows and believes. Thirdly, a focus on the teaching of language arts methodology with a constructivist perspective will be highlighted. Finally, the nature of reflection as a process for providing an insight into the integration of prior knowing and the construction of new learning is investigated.

Prior Knowing Brought to Teacher Education

> We come to new settings with prior knowledge, experience, and ways of understanding, and our new perceptions and understandings build on these. We do not simply look at things as if we had never seen anything like them before. (Patton, 1990, p. 504)

Professional year education students are no exception and as Lortie (1975) admonishes, "the mind of an education student is not a blank awaiting inscription" (p. 66). Each prospective teacher brings a unique biographical blend of prior knowing, based on experiences and beliefs, grounded in his or her own constructs of what it means to teach and to be a teacher. A belief, defined as an acceptance of the truth or actuality of anything without certain proof, a mental conviction, represents something held to be true or actual (Avis, 1978, p.129). Belief denotes acceptance with or without proof. For example, an education student might hold the belief that round robin reading is an accepted and routine pedagogic practice of benefit to all pupils in an elementary classroom. Such a belief may be based solely on one's past experiences as an elementary school pupil but held, over time, to the present to be accepted, and desirable, teaching practice.

Language arts methods classes, with thirty students per section, represent a diverse myriad of various individualized life experiences and associated beliefs. How individuals were taught to read and write, and whether they found these processes to be memorable, personally successful, challenging or the source of despair are examples of prior knowing that are not erased from consciousness when one enrolls in a teacher education program. According to Knowles and Cole (1996), prior experiences "indelibly imprinted by life, school and career experiences" (p. 654) are often the source of incomplete or negative understandings about becoming a teacher. The challenge for teacher educators is to take this existing prior knowing into account, as it exerts a powerful influence on subsequent learning in the university classroom and teaching in the practicum classroom. Short (1993) is critical of the teaching of future teachers, claiming that the prior knowing of education students is disregarded, when she writes that "teacher educators operate in a system of isolated and fragmented courses, passing on knowledge about teaching to frequently passive students" (p. 156).

The powerful influence of prior knowing is further underscored in Valli's (1992) claim that "a priori assumptions about what constitutes good teaching are particularly difficult to dislodge" (p.224). This is affirmed by Feinman-Nemser's (1990) assertion that one of the main tasks of teacher education is essentially a process of resocialization for the very reason that "prospective teachers are no strangers to classrooms" (p.227). The same does not hold true for other professional candidates, for example in medicine or forestry, where a university student will not have had the opportunity to observe, assess and form preconceptions, from the age of five or six, as to the daily actions and professional duties of doctors or foresters. Richert (1992) quotes a figure of more than sixteen thousand hours, spent as pupils, prior to entering teacher education. These hours spent observing their own teachers provide the basis for both positive role models, the teacher they would like to become, and negative role models, the type of teacher they wish to avoid (Bruner, 1977; Suwannatrai, 1993; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The influence of former teachers and classroom experiences cannot be overlooked as these form the foundations of each education student's present system of beliefs. Both obvious and subtle examples of former teachers form the basis for preconceptions about teaching and self as teacher, and the longevity of these influences has been reported to influence teaching practices after as long as nine years in the teaching profession (Nias in Zeichner & Gore, 1990). It is the influence of a significant teacher which often becomes the impetus for embarking upon a teaching career (Zulich & Herrick, 1992).

In researching the phenomena of pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, Bullough (1991) examined student teachers' metaphors about teaching and discovered that they were founded on preconceptions gleaned and remembered from their own days as school pupils. He concludes by questioning the impact of teacher education when the student's prior knowledge is ignored. He suggests that prior knowledge about teaching serves as a filter through which the student responds to teacher education. Content and experiences that tend to confirm the schema of self as teacher are accepted whereas those that do not are rejected. Thus, teacher education could have greater impact if the novice's background about teaching is incorporated into instruction in teacher education (p. 43).

The individual's interpretations of the world are, as Bruner (1986) points out, based on our direct and indirect experiences, and "what emerges for us is a conceptual world. When we are puzzled about what we encounter, we renegotiate its meaning in a manner that is concordant with what those around us believe" (p. 122). Teacher education is a process of teacher socialization (Zeichner & Gore, 1990) and the preservice teachers come to the learning situation with prior experiential knowing that "affects the ways in which they interpret and make use of new information" (p. 332). This suggests that teacher education courses are ideally situated in the renegotiating of meaning in becoming a teacher and must attempt to make room for ongoing opportunities which actively encourage students to examine, share and speak to aspects of their prior knowing, aspects which may enhance or inhibit new learning. To illustrate, a teacher education student who has always had difficulty with spelling may most likely approach the topic teaching of spelling with less zeal and ease than the peer who has always taken an interest in the intricacies of the English language. In a similar vein, discussions in my language arts classes as to the efficacy of spelling bees clearly illustrate the range of strongly held childhood beliefs of individual students, grounded only in their prior experiential knowing.

Sakari (1986) identified not only childhood and education experiences but also maturity and work experiences as factors having an influence on preservice teachers' beliefs. Such findings speak directly to the stated questions of my research, an attempt to explore those aspects of prior knowing that are personally relevant and which influence the ongoing construction of new learning in the professional year experience.

Lortie's (1975) theory of the apprenticeship of observation emphasizes the effect of prior, pretraining influences on teacher socialization, a result of the "influence of thousands of hours spent by teachers as pupils", contending that "formal teacher education is viewed as having little ability to alter the cumulative effects of this anticipatory socialization" (p. 334). This apprenticeship stance is also carried into student teaching experiences (Tardif, 1985; Britzman, 1986), with Tardif's conclusion that we teach as we are taught and, without encouraging student teachers to scrutinize their existing assumptions about teaching, we are tacitly encouraging the perpetuation of the 'unconscious and internalized influences of their previous teachers' practices" (p. 91). MacKinnon and Erickson (1992) present a case study of Rosie, a student teacher whose view of teaching as transmission, as telling, "probably originating in her own experience", proved to be the source of difficulty in her not allowing the students in her class more responsibility for their own learning. Her response, "Well, isn't that what teachers do? Isn't that a part of it?" (p. 202) serves as a clear testamonial to the deep seated beliefs brought to teacher education and, in this instance, put into practice in the practicum classroom.

This apprenticeship of observation results in the internalization of a firm, yet subconscious, notion of what a teacher does and how a teacher acts, based on the highly visible practices of one's own teachers (Carter, 1994; Craig, Bright & Smith, 1994; Lortie, 1975). That students in teacher education programs have their own internalized preconceptions as to what constitutes successful teaching is a well documented phenomena (Britzman, 1986; Bullough, 1991; Carter, 1990; Clark, 1988; Clark & Lampert, 1986; Lortie, 1975; Newman, 1990; Richert, 1992).

In summary, each future teacher brings to a teacher education program an individualized, tacit body of prior knowing, beliefs and assumptions grounded in his or her own unique previous accumulation of experiences and interpretations of these experiences. This prior knowing, based on one's life experiences and lingering perspectives as a former school pupil, is subject to misinformation, incomplete information and deeply held beliefs as to what it means to teach and to be a teacher. Teacher educators, in turn, by examining and addressing the prior knowing brought to teacher education, may be in a position to enhance the education student's process of becoming a teacher by acknowledging, understanding and helping students to relate their prior, existing knowing to new professional learning.

A Constructivist View of Teacher Education

> Every experience lives on in further experiences. (Dewey, 1938, p. 27)

A constructivist perspective views learners as being purposeful sense-makers, constantly engaged in the task of constructing ideas to make sense out of the situations and events that they encounter (Black & Ammon, 1992; Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Carter, 1994; MacKinnon & Erickson, 1992; O'Loughlin, 1992). The learner actively constructs meaning influenced by what is already known and believed. In a teacher education program, each future teacher is involved in a process of interpreting new learnings through the lens of their prior experiences and beliefs (Bisesi and Raphael, 1995). Prior knowing brought to teacher education is intricately enmeshed with the construction of current learning, a recursive process where what is known affects what is new, and where what is new has the capacity to alter what was previously known.

Dewey (1938) writes that "every experience is a moving force" (p. 38) and previous experiences influence our understanding of subsequent experiences. He emphatically points out that experience does not directly equal education and that some aspects of our previous experiences are, in fact, too disconnected or 'mis-educative' with the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (p. 25). He further identifies two levels of experience, primary and secondary. Primary experience is the result of everyday encounters, subjected to minimal 'incidental reflection'. In the case of education students, aspects of their prior knowing, for example, being a participant in a spelling bee, would be typified as primary experience, “known but not understood” (Campbell, 1995, p. 74). The role of secondary experience serves to clarify the meaning of primary experience, through reflective inquiry. A mandate of teacher education, as informed by Dewey's views, can then be understood as serving to expand, clarify and enhance learning through providing for secondary experience, as a means of informing and reflecting upon our primary experience. Rather than perpetuating the artificial separation of these two levels of experience, integration of primary and secondary experience is seen as crucial, where one is used as the basis for informing and refining the other.

Bruner (1986) offers insight into the potentially confusing polarization of teacher education as a constructivist process or teacher education as knowledge transmission. He states that new learning invites the learner to become part of the "negotiatory process by which facts are created and interpreted." In so doing, the learner "becomes at once an agent of knowledge as well as a recipient of knowledge transmission" (p. 127).

Fosnot (1989) identifies four principles central to defining constructivism. These guiding principles are elaborated by Oldfather, Manning, White and Hart (1994) and seen as valuable in fostering a constuctivist perspective in a teacher education program.

"1. Knowledge consists of past constructions--our collective past and present constructions encompassing values, beliefs, and understandings of teacher education" (p. 17).

This principle embodies the notion of prior knowing brought to teacher education, as explored in the previous aspect of this literature review. The implications for teacher educators are twofold: firstly, it serves as a reminder that knowledge exists only in the minds of our students (Tobin and Jabonski, 1992). Secondly, novice teachers need opportunities to articulate and scrutinize their existing beliefs about teaching, with 'reasoned revision' (Pearson, 1989, p. 118) as one plausible outcome.

"2. Constructions come about through assimilation and accommodation and the sharing of ideas and input among education students is considered in terms of altering, rearranging, subdividing or recombining the new concepts " (p. 18). Individuals construct their own knowledge, "construe the world in terms of their own perceptions, perspectives and judgements" (Pape, 1992, p.67) both by assimilating (adding) and accommodating (readjusting) new learning and experiences into their existing prior knowing, their schemata. Whether new learning is accepted, rejected or merely acknowledged in passing is dependent upon this integration of prior knowing and new learning. The individual's interpretations of the world are, as Bruner (1986) points out, based on our direct and indirect experiences, and "what emerges for us is a conceptual world. When we are puzzled about what we encounter, we renegotiate its meaning in a manner that is concordant with what those around us believe" (p. 122). This reference to the beliefs of others speaks to the importance of the social construction of knowledge.

"3. Learning is an organic process of invention, rather than a mechanical process of accumulation" (p. 18).

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) state that "all knowledge is constructed and the knower is an intimate part of the known . . . ultimately constructivists understand that answers to all questions vary depending on the context in which they were asked and on the frame of reference of the person doing the asking" (pp. 137-138). Bruner (1986), similarly, asserts that on the basis of experiences--sensory, social and vicarious--"we construct many realities and do so with differing intentions" (p. 158). Thus, as leaners, we are not world receivers versus world makers (McKay, 1990) but constantly engaged in a process of balancing and integrating realities and intentions.

The prior reality Bruner addresses speaks directly to the prior knowing brought to a teacher education program by each prospective teacher. The reality each individual creates, the construction of his or her own knowledge, is created as each person interprets the world on the basis of prior experiences and beliefs. Bruner (1986) differentiates between the pedagogical processes of the teacher educator merely informing, the transmission of knowledge, and an invitation to learners to "extend [their] world of wonder to encompass [mine]" (p. 126). Such an invitation is most clearly exemplified by Duckworth's (1986) classic investigation of moon observations by her education students, in which her teaching is viewed as "engaging students in phenomena and working to understand the sense they are making of it" (p. 494).

"4. Meaningful learning occurs through reflection and resolution of cognitive conflict, and thus serves to negate earlier, incomplete levels of understanding" (p. 18).

This principle provides a clear role direction for teacher educators. Determining and addressing areas of cognitive conflict implies that attention be paid to the future teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs, and their interactions with new learning. Bruner (1986) writes that "any reality we create is based on a transmutation of some prior reality that we have taken as a given" (p. 158).

In summary, constructivist theory best describes the possible interaction between, and integration of, prior knowing and current learning. A recognition that all teacher education students are charged with integrating new learning into their existing construct systems illuminates the complexity of the teacher educator's task. It becomes not an either/or dichotomy, transmission of knowledge versus invention of knowledge, but a growing understanding of how the process of teaching future teachers can be meaningfully enhanced through an awareness that meaning is personally and socially constructed on the basis of what is already known and believed.

A Constructivist View of Language Arts Methodology

Short (1993) charges that the transmission model of teaching is still widely evident in teacher education courses and that the tenets of constructivism are largely dismissed in language arts methodology classrooms:

> Teacher educators primarily *talk* about reading, writing, learning and teaching rather than actually involving learners in these experiences. . . .Learners often come out of teacher education programs without a sense of themselves as educational decision makers. They have learned to rely on outside experts and prepackaged sets of ideas. . . Students are not encouraged to become risk-takers who live with the ambiguity and tension of knowing they must act on their current knowledge while realizing that these understandings are incomplete (pp. 156-157).

Short's views are contentious, though, in light of the constructivist perspective embraced, and voiced, by language arts researchers, authors of textbooks whose audience is primarily preservice teachers and teacher educators (Au, Mason & Scheu, 1995; Edwards & Malicky, 1996; Froese, 1994; Petty, Petty & Salzer, 1994; Temple & Gillet, 1996). Au et al. (1995) introduce their language arts methodology text with "Constructivism, whole language, literature-based instruction, process writing, flexible grouping--these are the concepts and approaches central to [their text]" (p ix). Froese (1994) defines whole language as a "child-centred, literature-based approach to language teaching that immerses students in real communication situations wherever possible" (p. 2). Viewed within a constructivist perspective, he writes that

> meaning is personally "constructed" gradually through one's interactions with things, events, ideas and so forth. Students of all ages need to be actively involved in learning, must be given opportunities to reflect upon what they are doing, and must be involved in decision making. Social interaction is vital to this process. Autonomy is a major aim and the teacher's role is a facilitative one (p. 11).

Baird (1992) asserts that "if one holds a constructivist view of learning, in which the learner actively constructs meaning according to what he or she already knows and believes, it follows that good teaching must itself involve learning through active enquiry" (p. 36). Craig et al. (1994) state that the actions of the education instructor and the involvement of the education student are crucial elements in implementing a constructivist approach in language arts methodology courses. They list the following goals, in their instruction of future teachers:

"- generate a passion for reading
- ensure students feel comfortable and successful
- promote active involvement
- provide experiences and expectations that help students reach their potential" (p. 97).

The term the authors use is "an interactive constructivist approach" (p. 97) and they assert that determining and monitoring the preservice teachers' reactions to such an approach is key to informing and refining our own instruction, as teacher educators. It follows that providing opportunities for written, personal reflection may have merit both in promoting active involvement and capturing the immediacy of meaning construction by the preservice teachers.

In adopting a constructivist perspective, our understanding of the role of the teacher educator, in this case the language arts methodology instructor, is crucial. Tobin and Jakubowski (1992) differentiate the two polarized stances as "teacher as dispenser of knowledge" and "teacher as facilitator of understanding" (p.167). The former stance disallows, makes no room for, the prior knowing brought to teacher education; a constructivist stance encourages, and makes time for, the active interaction and integration of prior knowing and disciplinary knowledge. Duckworth (1986) writes "people must construct their own knowledge and assimilate new experiences in ways that make sense to them. I knew that, more often than not, simply telling students what we want them to know leaves them cold" (p. 481).

According to a constructivist theory of learning and understanding, meaning and understanding are constructed in particular circumstances by individuals according to their distinctive conceptual and emotional biographies. One comes to know, in other words, by inventing understanding, and this invention involves an interaction of past knowledge with the direct or indirect experience of the moment. A constructivist perspective emphasizes the importance of direct experience and the gradual accumulation of knowledge structures from reflection on that experience over time. "This constructivist perspective underlies Schön's (1983) analysis of knowledge in action, or, the special knowledge that comes to be during practice, as teachers [and student teachers] interpret scenes and discover dilemmas" (Doyle, 1990, p. 17). The keeping of a daily log during practicum teaching may aid in capturing some aspects of the process of constructing meaning, based on prior knowing, in context specific classroom teaching.

In conclusion, thoughtfully informed language arts methodology instruction will take into account the span of prior knowing brought to the university classroom, by thirty or more students per class. The teaching of language arts concepts and approaches are more likely to be integrated with the individuals' existing knowing when the teacher educator gives consideration to the tenets of a constructivist view of how the process of meaning making is best enhanced.

The Nature of Reflection in Teacher Education

> Reflection on lived experience is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through. (van Manen, 1990, p. 10)

As professional year education students advance toward their common goal of becoming certified teachers, their constructions of new learning become part of their prior knowing and prior knowledge. This process of meaning making is characterized by its fluidity and recursiveness, making it elusive. In an attempt to capture glimpses of aspects of this constructivist process, the individual's integrating of past and present experiences, the potential of reflection is seen as a promising way to make the elusive more apparent.

We can only reflect on what we already know, or believe we know, however tentative. As a teacher educator, it is an ongoing challenge to model reflective thinking, encourage reflection within class time allotments, and respond to what individuals choose to share. Researchers and teacher educators have used student journals, a source of written reflections, to investigate a wide variety of preservice teachers' preconceptions and evolving conceptions about teaching (Clark & Lampert, 1986; Johnston, 1994; Newman, 1990, 1991; Richert, 1992). "Journals and logs function as mirrors for reflecting our beliefs back to us and create opportunities for the unexpected to emerge" (Newman, 1991, p. 337).

Craig et al. (1994) had each language arts methods student make a journal entry once per week over a sixteen week period. Journal entries were coded and grouped as to whether comments made about the instructional approach used by the instructor were positive or negative. Their content analysis of the reflective journal comments were found to center on three aspects of the language arts classes--actions of the instructor, student involvement, and the value of the approach to their individual learning. These findings informed the teacher educators/researchers as to salient aspects of their course presentation, providing insights as to what aspects of their teaching enhanced, or limited, the meaning making of their students.

Richert (1992) used journal entries as part of an investigation on student teachers' reflections, using varying individual and partner conditions--journals, freewrites and reflection interviews. She found that the students who wrote individually in journals responded more personally to teaching, and in a more open manner, than those for whom sharing with a fellow student was an expectation. Richert contends that reflection is a complex task for preservice teachers and her findings indicate that the expression and validation of feelings--among them "uncertainty, self-doubt, frustration and fatigue"--in turn lead to "other areas or levels of analysis as they contemplate their experiences in the classroom" (p. 188).

Richert's contention, though, that a higher level of analysis is reached is disputed by Hoover's (1994) study of reflective writing in which she described and interpreted the reflective thinking of two secondary student teachers during their final practicum experiences. She concluded that "written reflection does not necessarily lead to more analytic thought about teaching and learning, particularly if personal levels of concern dominate preservice teachers' deliberation" (p. 91). Further, she contends that written assignments would offer a more explicit insight into the student teachers' cognitive processes.

The disparate findings in these two studies can be traced, at least in part, to the researcher's differing purposes for having the preservice teachers engage in reflective writing--Richert's study is sensitive to aspects of the professional socialization of student teachers, while Hoover's study sought to explore dimensions of analytic thought made evident through reflective analysis of the student's role as teacher.

Guillaume and Rudney (1983) investigated the concerns raised by student teachers in their reflective journals during a professional academic year, consisting of classroom observations and teaching experiences. The journal entries were read periodically and responded to in a non-evaluative manner. The student teachers' concerns fell into six categories: lesson planning and evaluation; discipline; relationships with pupils; relationships with sponsor teachers and adjustments to their classrooms; working with others in the profession; and transition from student to professional teacher. While the six categories were found to remain constant throughout the year, the emphasis within each category shifted, as the student teacher-to-teacher transition took place. In the category of discipline, for example, the journal entries reflected a marked change in perspective. Student teachers' views on classroom discipline were initially expressed as a personal survival concern, but over time grew and shifted into a more professional concern for the impact of their disciplinary methods on the pupils.

Zulich, Bean and Harris (1992) used dialogue journals to determine stages of preservice teacher development as students engaged in three distinct education courses. Three stages of development were ascertained, each stage colored by the student's own particular personal biography. The first stage, introductory, was characterized across participants by idealism, a positive attitude about teacher education and what was forthcoming. The second stage, intermediate, coincided with a practicum teaching assignment. At this stage, effective lesson planning and the specifics of teaching replaced more global concerns. The final stage, immersion, the sink or swim phenomena of student teaching, was met with varying degrees of success by the eight participants. Personal biography, encompassing perceptions of what it means to teach and be a teacher, was seen as a crucial factor in each participant's case study, interacting with the education program to influence the individual's beliefs and practices. Their study supports Pinar's (1986) and Britzman's (1987) contentions that, as teacher educators, it is important to pay heed to the personal biographies of education students.

In assessing biweekly journal entries, in which education students were asked to relate course content and readings to their own beliefs and practical experiences, Surbeck, Han and Moyer (1991) determined three categories of student responses. Reaction, elaboration and contemplation were used as descriptors for the journal entries, with the reaction and elaboration categories forming the majority. The authors concluded that when all three categories were present, greater integration of information was in evidence.

It is important to determine how the process of journal writing contributes to the process of reflection by education students, and at the same time informs teacher educators as to factors which enhance or impede the construction of knowledge by their students. Carter (1994) investigated eight student teacher's well-remembered events, as recorded in weekly journal entries, over a thirteen week practicum experience. Classroom management, curriculum issues, idiosyncratic topics, individual pupils, diversity and self were identified as the patterns emerging from the reporting of well-remembered events. Carter concluded that this strategy of writing about well-remembered events holds promise for determining those topics that are essential for inclusion in teacher education, as they influence the subsequent construction of teaching conceptions.

In summary, as teacher education students integrate new learning into their existing construct system, the new learnings themselves become part of their prior knowing and prior knowledge. This process is characterized by its fluidity and recursiveness, making it elusive. In an attempt to capture glimpses of aspects of this constructivist process, the potential of written reflections by education students is seen as a promising way to make the elusive more evident.

Journal entries written by education students offer teacher educators an opportunity to gain a unique glimpse into the reflective meaning making of the individual. Although the use of journal writing in the various research investigations cited represents a variety of researcher intents, all share an attempt to capture the immediacy of the participants' responses and reactions--the fleeting, elusive instances of insights into the individuals' current construction of meaning as colored by their own prior knowing.

Concluding Remarks

The four areas investigated in the preceding review of the literature inform the research investigation to be presented in the forthcoming chapters. The four sections, although presented separately, are inseparable in their potential to both inform and impact teacher education.

Prior knowing brought to teacher education is a powerful entity, in that it affects subsequent learning. The existing knowledge and prior experience that education students bring to the methodology classroom and student teaching practicum influences the ways in which they interact with their current learning, observations and interpretations.

The construction of meaning is an interactive process, an ongoing transaction between prior knowing and new learning. Teacher education, in part a resocialization from former school pupil to school teacher, has potential as an active agent of change. Teacher educators, by acknowledging and addressing the prior knowing brought to education, can enhance the relevance and meaningfulness of the education students' construction of new learnings.

The relevance of a constructivist view of teaching and learning, as opposed to a transmission view, is evidenced by a paradigm shift in the teaching of language arts methodology to education students. All learners, education students and school pupils alike, construct knowledge on the basis of what is already known through the lens of their previous experiences. There is a growing acknowledgement that active involvement is a key factor in the construction of new learning, an important consideration in the pedagogical approach to language arts methodology instruction.

Reflective writing by education students has two major purposes in the research undertaken in this study. It encourages the students to examine their own learning processes, examine how they make sense of new learning on the basis of their prior knowing. Secondly, it provides a window of insight for me, as researcher, concerning aspects of how prior knowing interacts with, and affects, new learning.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of each participant's integration of prior knowing and new understandings in three contiguous, professional year situations: as a language arts methodology student in a year long course, as a student teacher during a final practicum placement in an elementary classroom, and as a graduate of the education program. Six student teachers, assigned to me as their University supervisor in the spring of 1995, agreed to become participants in this study. Thus, I came to know each of the participants in three varied contexts: as a student in my language arts methods class, as their practicum supervisor, and as a certified teacher during the post graduation interviews.

Selecting an Inquiry Paradigm

The research undertaken was a descriptive, naturalistic study in that "the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting...rather, the point of using qualitative methods is to understand naturally occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states" (Patton, 1990, pp. 39, 41). The aim of descriptive research is to examine events or phenomena (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; and Patton, 1990) and the focus of my research has centred on my openness to what the participants chose to share through their written and spoken words. Lincoln and Guba (1985) write that naturalistic inquiry is also known by such names as "ethnographic", "field study", "case study" or "participant observation" (p. 65), all of which guided pertinent aspects of the research undertaken.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was involved in participant observation, as was appropriate to the changing contexts of data collection. According to Best (1981), "using the methods of participant observation, the researcher observes, listens to, and converses with the subjects in as free and natural an atmosphere as possible" (p. 113). Given my many years of experience as a language arts professor and as a student teacher supervisor, the research process further demanded the ongoing necessity of rigorous documentation.

Although the presence of the observer changes the situation being observed (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984), this presence, over time, is thought to lessen in impact. In my previous experiences in being a student teacher supervisor, I have found the same phenomena to be true. The first observational visit can be the cause of much concern to the student teacher. However, subsequent observations take on a more focused and collaborative air and my presence comes to be perceived as one of mentor and advocate.

Spradley (1980) addresses the dual role of participant observation as "(1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation" (p. 54). As a participant observer, my degree of involvement, as researcher, would be classified as moderate participation, described as maintaining a balance between being an insider and an outsider in the varying research contexts.

The Research Contexts

As a professor in a small education department in a university-college setting, I teach the language arts methodology course to all sixty professional year students, with thirty students in each class. In addition, I am required to supervise the final student teaching practicum of six of the professional year students. In early February, 1995, the six students were assigned to me as their faculty supervisor. Their elementary classroom placements were in five local schools. At the time of our first contact, in my role as practicum supervisor, I met with the students individually, described my research interests and invited each of the six students to be a participant in the study. Because each of the six potential participants and I had come to know each other in the context of the language arts methodology course, and with my assurance that my role as practicum supervisor would be compatible with my role as researcher, none of the student teachers expressed reservations about becoming participants in the proposed research. To the contrary, they each seemed genuinely interested in the research topic and pleased to be an invited participant. At this time, I obtained a signed agreement, guaranteeing their anonymity and their right to opt out of the research at any time without penalty.

The Participants

The six participants in this research were five women and one man. This gender balance approximates the professional year enrollment where about ten to fifteen percent of the students are males. To ensure their anonymity, each participant chose a pseudonym and was identified on a first name basis only in the resulting documentation. Following is a brief description of each of the six participants:

Karen

Karen entered the professional year of the education faculty in her late thirties, married and the mother of two teenagers and one preteen.

Karen graduated from high school and "never thought about going to university." Starting as a bookkeeper, "at the bottom", Karen, over fifteen years with the same employer, also worked as a secretary, then as a paralegal with management responsibilities.

Karen recounted that she "always wanted to be a teacher." Married to an educator, and as the mother of three school aged children, Karen was an active participant in her children's classrooms. She was encouraged by school personnel to pursue a career as a teacher. It took "three years to make the decision." To test her interest, she enrolled in a first year university English course, attending in the evenings. Finding success as a student, she enrolled in full time studies with the goal of acceptance into the teacher education program.

Harrison

Harrison was 23 years old and newly married when he entered the professional year of the teacher education program.

Immediately following high school graduation, Harrison spent three months in New Zealand where he attended a bible school. Upon returning to his hometown, he worked at a variety of jobs: at a ski hill, in construction, as a delivery man for a furniture store, and as a church youth coordinator. Finding his church work with children of all ages rewarding, he began to seriously contemplate a career as a teacher. Harrison found his interactions with the elementary aged children the most interesting and decided to pursue a career path that would allow him to work with this age group. He then relocated in order to attend university, taking two years of arts classes as a prerequisite in order to meet the entrance requirements of the teacher education program.

Marie

Marie was 25 years old as she began her professional year in teacher education. She went straight from high school into a university arts program, completing two years as the needed prerequisite for teacher education at a university in another province. Two serious illness changed her plans and feeling that "There were other plans for me", she entered an academically less demanding parochial program, earning a diploma in sacred studies. A parochial life in two North American locations left Marie with the feeling that "I hadn't finished what I wanted to do. I didn't feel growth was possible with people telling me what to do for twenty-four hours a day."

Returning home, she again enrolled in the local university's arts faculty taking the prerequisite courses for admission to the teacher education program. Her first professional year practicum, five weeks in length, was fraught with classroom management concerns to the point that she seriously considered leaving the teacher education program. More illness, which Marie labeled "stress related", occurred before and following her final student teaching practicum, although she had not been sick since obtaining her teacher certification.

Dawn

Dawn was 27 years old when she entered the professional year of the teacher education program. She lived with her long term boyfriend and worked at a department store, sixteen hours per week, throughout the professional year. In her words, the added demand of work "was too much."

Dawn "wanted to be a teacher since I was a kid. I played school since grade one." Dawn was the youngest of seven siblings, the only one to go to university. After graduating from high school, she took four years off. "I wanted to go back, but I didn't know about student loans, didn't have the information, the way to do it. Also, I was scared of college, my confidence level wasn't there." She began by taking three courses at a time, always with the goal of being accepted into the teacher education program. During this time, Dawn's mother was diagnosed with a terminal illness and Dawn and her sister took turns nursing their mother in her home. Dawn's mother passed away just prior to Dawn's acceptance into the education program.

One week before her final seven week practicum, Dawn's boyfriend relocated to a new city to start up a business. He will move again to join Dawn once she is settled in a full time teaching job. Both prefer a rural community.

Stormi

Stormi entered the professional year of the teacher education program as a single mother of three children, two teens and one preteen.

Stormi "always wanted to be a teacher." She was strongly influenced by her grandmother who graduated from normal school, became a teacher at 16 years of age, and taught until she reached retirement age. Stormi enrolled in an early childhood program immediately upon graduating from high school. She dropped out after the first semester because she felt "that age group was not for me. I didn't want to be a babysitter." Stormi graduated from secretarial school with high marks but considered her work as a secretary merely a "holdover, until I found something else." Marriage, three young children and frequent moves because of her husband's career resulted in Stormi's being an "at home mom" for many years. She volunteered at her children's schools and her desire to be a teacher remained strong.

Stormi began taking university courses as a prerequisite for teacher education. Her marriage ended and a university counsellor suggested several possible teacher education programs in another province. Stormi chose a new city and, with no family or friends at her new destination, relocated herself and her three children over the summer, entering the teacher education program that fall.

Michelle

Michelle entered the professional year of the teacher education program in her early thirties, married and the mother of a preschooler.

After graduating from high school, Michelle attended university for one and a half years, where she "partied." She then moved to another province and worked in the planning division of an oil company. Michelle travelled to Australia and New Zealand, then settled in Eastern Canada, working as a materials control supervisor in the automobile industry. She married and, missing her hometown and family after ten years away, she and her husband relocated. After the birth of her baby, she reconsidered her current employment with a local manufacturing plant and "knew I didn't want to do this anymore." Because Michelle "always wanted to be a teacher", she began university in the arts faculty and "geared every course" towards her application to the education faculty.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was achieved through "sustained contact with people in settings where they normally spend their time" (Patton, 1990, p. 2). The language arts methods class met for two 2 hour classes, twice a week--14 classes in the fall of 1994 and 16 classes in the winter of 1995. The final student teaching practicum placement consisted of seven weeks of teaching duties in an assigned elementary classroom. The six participants were situated in five different schools. As a University supervisor, I observed in each participant's classroom a minimum of once each week.

Multiple sources of data collection were utilized, allowing for triangulation of the data. As Patton (1990) writes, "Using triangulation is recognition that the researcher needs to be open to more than one way of looking at things" (p. 193). Triangulation of data, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985),

> is crucially important in naturalistic studies. As the study unfolds and particular pieces of information come to light, steps should be taken to validate each against at least one other source (for example, a second interview) and/or a second method (for example, an observation in addition to an interview). No single item of information (unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source) should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated. (p. 283)

The data were analyzed in an ongoing manner once the student teachers were assigned to me in the winter of 1996 and agreed to be participants in my study.

Data Sources

Data collected for this study spanned the participants' professional year in the education program and a post teacher certification interview in the year following. Data collected involved the following sources:

1) Language arts journals: These included the participants' written reflections at the conclusion of each language arts methodology class. Twice weekly journal entries were written during a ten minute session at the conclusion of each class for a total of 30 classes. In order to ensure that the journal assignment had a measure of importance, students were informed that their participation in the ongoing writing would be worth a full 10 per cent of their final grade. This 10 per cent would be compromised only by incomplete or late journal submissions. I collected the journals at four intervals during the academic year and returned them with written feedback. I obtained written permission to photocopy each participant's journal entries.

The language arts methodology journal entries were an attempt to capture the participant's prior knowing as it interacted with new understanding presented in each class. Personal relevance was of the utmost concern here, as it allowed insight into the individual's interpretation and meaning making, based on each participant's immediate response to the class content.

2) Student teaching logs: These included the participants' written reflections for each student teaching day. In accordance with the education program's guidelines, each student teacher was required to keep a daily written log, chronicling their classroom experiences and thoughts during their seven week final practicum. As their

practicum supervisor, it was my responsibility to read and give feedback on these log entries to each participant at the time of each classroom observation. I obtained written permission to photocopy each participant's written reflections.

The process of reflecting on each teaching day and committing these reflections to paper permitted me, as researcher, an opportunity to capture and gain insight into the relevant aspects of prior knowing as it interacted with classroom teaching during the practicum. As the student teachers constructed ideas to make sense of daily classroom happenings, their reflections offered unique insights into how they, as individuals, made sense of the practicum experience in the light of their prior knowing.

3) Fieldnotes based on classroom observations/audio taped discussions: My weekly visits to the participant's classrooms combined my role as both supervisor and researcher. My observational visits were pre-arranged for a mutually convenient time. In my role as practicum supervisor, I had an opportunity to observe each student teacher's classroom teaching and record these observations in the form of fieldnotes. Following my observation, each participant and I had an immediate opportunity to discuss my input as to their student teaching, both as recorded in my fieldnotes and in the light of any concerns presented. In this situation, classroom and teaching schedules took priority but my ultimate goal was to have the time to debrief with each participant, as soon as possible following their observed teaching. These conversations were audio taped, where feasible, and transcribed and analyzed. I

obtained written permission from each participant indicating their willingness to have these discussions audio taped. Based on what emerged during these discussions, the focus for subsequent classroom observations was determined.

Spradley (1980) advises that "the sooner you record your observations the more vivid and detailed your account" (p. 70). Fieldnotes were written as I observed each participant's classroom teaching. The audio taping of each participant's post teaching debriefing discussion can, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), be a useful supplement to fieldnotes when used selectively. They caution that there is no replacement for the participant observer and her fieldnotes. It was hoped that the immediacy of meaning construction could be documented without the distraction of me, as the practicum supervisor/researcher, writing copious notes.

In my role of practicum supervisor, however, I became aware of some of the impediments to this intent. The duality of my role as supervisor/evaluator and researcher was evident, for example, in the audio-taped discussions following my observation of a participant's student teaching. My concern for a high quality of recording had to be balanced with a sensitivity to a soft-spoken participant who spoke in a hushed, confidential manner. Also to be taken into account were each participant's school scheduling demands. Recess and lunch hour duties, extra curricular involvements, the lack of suitable meeting facilities in overcrowded schools, and the lack of privacy sometimes compromised my research agenda. Lastly, my role as researcher had to be congruous with my own hectic student teaching supervision demands of six student teachers in five different schools, in addition to ongoing campus teaching and faculty responsibilities.

4) Post-certification interviews with the participants: These interviews were carried out in June, thirteen months after the participants' graduation, and teacher certification, from the elementary teacher education program. This lapse in time was necessary in order to give the newly teacher certified participants some distance from the professional year experience. As newly certified teachers, the six participants were involved, in the year following completion of the teacher education program, with one or a combination of continued university studies, substitute teaching, volunteer teaching work in elementary schools and the community, full time classroom teaching, self-employment related to teaching, and employment unrelated to teaching. Their individual, and often overlapping, pursuits are summarized here: five participants pursued further studies in an education program, three were employed as teachers-on-call, two volunteered their time in elementary schools, one volunteered in a community based literacy program, two had secured employment as full time classroom teachers, one had set up a home-based educational program, and two worked at jobs unrelated to teaching.

The post-certification interview with each participant, in essence a 'member check', afforded an opportunity for me, as researcher, to revisit the professional year experience as documented through the triangulated data collection. The language arts methods class journals, the practicum observation fieldnotes, the participant's student teaching logs, and the audio taped post observation discussions all amalgamated into a unique perspective as to how participants used their prior knowing as they constructed new meaning and made sense of the variety of professional year experiences. The focus of the interview with the participants was to share my thematic analysis of their professional year experiences as education students in my language arts methods class and as student teachers undertaking their final student teaching practicum experience.

The initial focus of each participant's interview was determined on the basis of my findings in the thematic analysis of the collective data. The identification of themes for the professional year experience of the participants was achieved with respect to their individual prior knowing and meaning making, although both differences and commonalities were evident across participants.

A second focus of each participant's interview was to revisit their perceptions of the reflection-based assignments, both in the language arts methodology course and during their final student teaching practicum. Reflective writing was viewed, for the purposes of this research study, as an expedient means to afford an insightful perspective as to the participants' construction of meaning as prior knowing transacted with current learning. The final interview served as a means to further investigate the efficacy and the legitimacy of this assumption.

Data Analysis

> The data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous. I have found no way of preparing students for the sheer volume of information with which they will find themselves confronted when data collection has ended. Sitting down to make sense out of pages of interviews and fieldnotes can be overwhelming. Dealing with all those pieces of paper seems like an overwhelming task. (Patton, 1990, p. 379)

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) write that the interpretation of data requires the researcher to "specify what the data mean for the questions asked in the study" (p. 206). The data were coded and analyzed for initial classification for each individual participant. "Analysis is a search for patterns" (Spradley, p. 85).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) set out four detailed steps to be followed in data analysis. These steps (p. 344) , and my implementation of them, are detailed below:

1. Unitizing: identifying units of information within the array of data collected.

I began with the language arts journals. Using a separate, colored highlighting pen for each participant, I unitized each journal in totality before moving on to the next. Each written statement was considered, highlighted as a unit, transcribed to a separate index card, coded as to source, and assigned a unitizing word or phrase. The following excerpt, from a language arts journal, illustrates my procedure:

> I'm sure that I will develop firmer beliefs and understandings once I'm out in the "real world" of teaching. (1-LAJ-17-2-Oct. 19/94)

was coded as participant 1, language arts journal entry, page 17, segment 2, written on October 19, 1994, and was unitized as 'expectations/forthcoming practicum'. This unitizing phrase was based on the expectation inherent in the statement and interpreted in light of the fact that a five week practicum, the first of two professional year practicum experiences, was imminent.

2. Categorizing: placing the initially unitized data into provisional categories, using the method of constant comparison.

Two types of categories were developed at this stage--those constructed by the researcher and therefore delimited by the first research question posed, and those that emerged as categories used by the participants.

The unitized index cards for each individual participant were sorted into related categories for the purpose of initial classification. For example, Marie's initial classification yielded categories such as memories of being an elementary student, self as learner, surprise at new learning, and phonics teaching.

3. Filling in the patterns: beginning with a review of the entire category of unitized data and then reviewing miscellaneous units, determining overlapping, unwieldy or missing categories and examining possible relationships among categories.

A review of the entire category set at this time was important to ensure that the complete set of data for each participant was accounted for.

4. Member Checks: where my thematic analysis of their professional year experience was presented to each participant for their consideration and reaction.

A member check served to bring the participant's involvement in my research project and our ongoing relationship with each other as participant and researcher to a mutually satisfactory conclusion. The member check was additionally helpful in allowing me to double check details as to autobiographical information for the participant profiles and to be brought up to date on their current teaching careers and/or academic involvements. Finally, the resulting research dissertation will be made available to each participant. As Spradley (1980) admonishes, "Although "fair return" will vary from one informant to the next, the needs of informants for some gain from the project must not be ignored" (p. 25).

Establishing a Coding System

I began by establishing a coding system for each participant, for each data source. The participants were assigned an identification number, 1 through 6. Each source of data was assigned an abbreviated name. This coded information was followed by page number, a number signifying location on the page, and the date. Hence, 2- LAJ-15-4-Jan. 6/95 was the code for participant 2, language arts journal, page 15, segment 4, written on January 6,

1995. The student teaching log was abbreviated as STL, fieldnote entries as FN, and the final interview as FI. The exception to this coding procedure were the audio taped discussions with each participant. Here I listened and relistened to each participant's recorded post teaching discussion and transcribed and dated pertinent information. Transcribed entries were coded as in the following example: 6-AT-May 4/95, representing participant 6, audio taped information, recorded on May 4, 1995.

Outside Readers

In an attempt to ensure that my research process and findings were authentically presented and grounded in the milieu of teacher education portrayed, three outside readers were invited to peruse my writing at various points in time. They proved to be valuable sources of questions, comments and insights during the course of this investigation. One outside reader was an education faculty teaching peer, similarly involved in teaching methodology courses and supervising student teaching. A second outside reader was a former faculty peer, most recently an elementary classroom teacher, also familiar with the specifics of teaching and practicum supervision in the education program. The third outside reader was a former education student who was in my language arts course and whose final practicum I supervised four years previously.

Summary

The design of the research study and the methodology employed represent my attempt, as researcher, to portray the professional year in teacher education as an accurate, thematic reflection of the participants' experiences and perceptions. The use of triangulated data maximized the intent of this inquiry: to explore the transactions between prior knowing and current learning in three contiguous teacher education contexts. Qualitative research methodologies guided the collection and analysis of the data.

The six participants shared their written and spoken considerations with me and became the "informants" (Spradley, 1980) of this research study. Their anonymity was safeguarded through the use of pseudonyms and the purposeful omission of the names of peers, sponsor teachers, and pupils in their classrooms. Their right to withdraw from the study, without penalty, was documented at the outset of the inquiry.

The themes which emerged from the data analysis offered a naturalistic insight into the meaning making processes in the professional year of teacher education as experienced and related by the participants.

CHAPTER IV

CONSIDERING PRIOR KNOWING AND KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION IN A LANGUAGE ARTS METHODOLOGY COURSE AND A PROFESSIONAL YEAR FINAL PRACTICUM

Situating the Research Contexts

The Language Arts Methodology Course

All professional year education students had, prior to their attendance in the language arts methodology course, been required to take a one term introductory course in the study of language arts in the elementary school during their pre-professional year. This course, taught by another education faculty professor, is described as an overview of the teaching of language arts and the development of oral language and literacy in the elementary school, incorporating children's literature.

The language arts methodology course is a required course in the professional year of the elementary teacher education program. Two sections of the course are offered, with thirty students per class. The six participants were students in either one of the sections. The language arts classes met twice weekly for two hours per class. Each teacher education student, then, had a total of four hours of language arts methodology instruction per week. The 1994 fall term consisted of 14 lectures and the 1995 winter term consisted of 16 lectures. A total of 60 hours of instruction in language arts instruction was offered during the professional year. This total was eroded somewhat by tight time schedules, as students were given a ten minute break before moving to another education course.

This time frame demands an organized and efficient approach to teaching language arts methodology. Twenty-eight hours of class time in the fall term are followed by a five-week student teaching practicum in an elementary classroom. Classes resume in the new year with 32 hours of language arts instruction and the professional year experience culminates with a final seven-week student teaching practicum.

At my first meeting with the education students, I shared my statement of philosophy regarding the teaching of language arts:

Language Arts Methodology: Statement of Philosophy

> "Learning is a complex process of discovery, cooperation and inquiry; language facilitates this process..."
>
> "Language learning thrives when the learner is engaged in meaningful use of language." (Language Arts English Primary-Graduation Curriculum Guide, 1990, p. 12)

The language processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing form the foundations of lifelong learning. Two or more of these processes are vital aspects of meaningful interactions in every classroom, regardless of subject area. **Every teacher is a teacher of reading and the language arts,** and informed instruction enhances learning not only in the language arts classroom, but across the entire curriculum.

As teachers, and ongoing learners, of language it is of utmost importance that we examine both **what** we are doing and **why** we are doing it. Through ongoing consideration of our individual beliefs and practices, we afford ourselves the best possible opportunities for improving instruction for our students.

It is essential that we each view ourselves as lifelong learners. It is unrealistic to expect that one language arts methodology course will adequately prepare you for comprehensive teaching of all aspects of the language arts. The onus, then, is upon you, as a future teacher, to access a variety of resources to supplement, enhance, and extend your knowledge of the topics introduced and studied in this class.

Language Arts Methodology: Course Objectives

The course outline states my objectives. At the conclusion of the language arts methodology course, students will have acquired:

1. an understanding of the nature, development and functions of language, and of the complexities of the language arts and the interrelatedness of the learning tasks;
2. familiarity with the elementary language arts curriculum and its implementation in the classroom;
3. an understanding of the processes of listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and representing and of their interrelationships;
4. competence in developing student abilities in each of the language arts strands;

5. the ability to plan language arts lessons and units using a variety of appropriate instructional strategies and materials; and
6. the ability to evaluate and report on students' growth and abilities in the language arts.

Language Arts Methodology: Course Content

During the thirty language arts methodology classes in the professional year, the following topics were introduced and explored:

- introduction to language and language arts, including the components of the language arts; the interrelatedness of the language arts; language development; emergent literacy; an overview of the language arts program in the elementary school; and guiding principles for planning and instruction.
- instructional approaches to oral communication, including oral language in the elementary classroom; promoting active purposeful listening; and developing and sustaining talk in the classroom.
- instructional approaches to the teaching of reading, including the nature of the reading process; approaches to the teaching of reading; emergent literacy; comprehension strategies; word identification strategies; word knowledge and vocabulary development; and the assessment of reading.
- instructional approaches to written communication, including the writing process; participation in a writers' workshop; mechanics of composition; understanding and teaching grammar; understanding

and teaching spelling; understanding and teaching handwriting; and assessment of writing.

- understanding the reading/writing connection, including enhancing the reading/writing connection within the language arts classroom; enhancing the connection across the elementary curriculum.
- assessing language arts in the elementary classroom, including orientations in assessment; principles of assessment; and the assessment cycle.
- planning and managing the language arts program, including short term planning; long term planning; and organizing the leaning environment.

The Language Arts Journal Assignment

At the first meeting of the language arts methodology class, the language arts journal assignment was explained. A handout summarizing the purposes and the expectations supplemented my explanation:

> Each of us bring a unique combination of prior life experiences to this class which will, in turn, interact with the language arts methodology to be studied.
>
> You will keep a journal during the entire course and you will have this journal with you at every class. Use a separate duotang for this purpose. Write on the left half of the page only. Number the pages.

The purpose of this journal is to record your immediate responses and reactions to each class. What are your most important thoughts and considerations? Have some of your pre-existing beliefs been challenged? How does what you are learning connect with your own life experiences? What are some of the questions that arise for you as you work through this course?

During the last ten minutes of each class, you will be given time to write in your language arts journal. This is not to replace the notes you will take in class. Date each entry.

This journal is meant to capture the thoughts and feelings of individual students so each log will be different. Feel free to write in your journal between classes. These journals will be collected at intervals throughout the term. Full participation in this assignment is worth 10 per cent of your final grade, compromised only by late or incomplete submissions.

Although not stated explicitly, the focus of the language arts journals was to allow the students an opportunity to record their impressions and reactions in the time allotted in class, without an undue emphasis on correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Excerpts quoted are verbatim and in no way are intended to reflect upon the participants' degree of proficiency in their use of standard English.

The Final Professional Year Practicum Experience

The education program provides for a total of fourteen weeks of student teaching experiences in elementary school classrooms over the duration of the pre-professional and professional years. The pre-professional year culminates with a two week student teaching assignment. The professional year entails a five week practicum placement at the conclusion of the fall semester, and a seven week, final student teaching practicum at the conclusion of the winter semester. In preparation for the final practicum, weekly visits to the sponsor teacher's classroom are arranged for the duration of the winter term.

The stated goals of the professional year practicum experiences are:

> 1. To produce teachers who are well prepared with respect to current curriculum, and who are well equipped with knowledge of a range of appropriate methodology.
> 2. To develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for teachers to grow and change as the role of teachers evolves.
> 3. To meet the need of the province for teachers who are creative, articulate, and able to teach in ways consistent with the principles underlying Ministry of Education documents. (Education Program Student Handbook, 1994, p. 8).

The final seven-week practicum is supervised by the sponsor teacher and a University supervisor. Student teachers assume a recommended teaching load of:

week 1: 50% teaching time
week 2: 80%
weeks 3 through 6: 100% and
week 7: less than 80%.

The practicum evaluation is summative and graded on a pass/ withdraw/failure basis.

The six participants were placed in five different schools and my role became dual-tracked--University practicum supervisor and researcher.

The Student Teaching Log Assignment

Student teaching logs are an education faculty stipulation and require that each student teacher keep a daily record of their teaching experiences. The purpose of the entries is to encourage the student teachers to develop an ability to critically reflect upon their own teaching and to provide an opportunity for self-analysis of their ongoing professional and personal growth as a teacher. Bowman (1991) contends that:

> the primary purpose of pre-service teacher education programs ought to be to prepare teachers to become skilled reflective practitioners. . . that teachers and student teachers should think about what they do in order to keep improving what they do rather than merely repeating what they do (p. 40).

Although the purpose of the student teaching logs stipulates the need for education students in their final practicum to maintain a written record of their critical reflections, this requirement has been variously encouraged, overlooked or discouraged by individual practicum supervisors.

The participant's logs were kept in a separate duotang folder and were reviewed during my weekly supervisory visits. The content of the entries was used as a focus during the post-teaching discussion. The student teachers decided, on an individual basis, whether or not to share the content of their written logs with their sponsor teachers.

Summary

The research contexts for this inquiry were situated in non-contrived, naturally occurring professional year settings. The full year language arts methodology course and the seven week final student teaching practicum provided a multi-site (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 65) continuum for the ongoing reflective writing of the participants. The data collected represented the participants' ongoing process of meaning making in their everyday lives as professional year teacher education students.

7

CHAPTER V

A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF PRIOR KNOWING AND NEW LEARNING IN THE PROFESSIONAL YEAR OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

The central intent of this research study was to examine and describe the nature and function of prior knowing brought to the teacher education program as current learning in the professional year was constructed. The phrase "prior knowing" merits a contextual definition as a referent point in the thematic analysis of the professional year experience in teacher education. Prior, used as an adjective, is misleadingly straightforward, meaning to come before, preceding in time. The data have been analyzed in a temporally sensitive manner over the course of the participants' professional year. However, what was prior at the outset of the professional year had continuously grown in scope by the end. To illustrate, as the participants entered their professional year of teacher education, prior knowing of the student teaching experience consisted of a two week placement in an elementary classroom. By the conclusion of their professional year experience, prior knowing of the student teaching experience consisted of fourteen weeks of student teaching. The experience of an additional 12 weeks of student teaching had altered and expanded their initial constructs. Every experience became a prior experience by the act of engaging in it. It was not possible, nor desirable, to freeze the participants' prior knowing in one particular moment, as this denies the essence of growth, which is constructing new learning on the basis of what is already known and believed.

Knowing, defined, has a quality of emergence, of tentativeness, being subject to change--"1. to be cognizant of; have a concept in mind through seeing, hearing, reading. 2. to be certain of; apprehend as true or factual. 3. to be acquainted with through previous encounter; be familiar with" (Avis, 1978, p. 749).

The prior knowing, then, of the participants in this study was seen as what, in the immediacy of any given particular moment in the professional year experience, was perceived to be grounded in their emergent becoming, as teachers.

When the construct of prior knowing is examined personally in my role as researcher, it becomes evident that each encounter-- with my writing, data analysis, conversations and discussions with my supervisor-- inexorably shaped and added to the body of prior knowing I brought to my subsequent working sessions. So, too, with the participants: their prior knowing was not a fixed and static entity. Insights into their growing prior knowing, and how it interacted with new learning, remained the unifying intent of the data analysis. Just as in my research process, it was not always possible for me to identify and separate what came before, what was prior in terms of my current knowing, there are similar parallels in the participants' experiences.

Our construction of new learning is based on our prior knowing. The lens of experience through which we view new learning, the beliefs and knowledge accumulated over time, affirm the recursive interaction between prior knowing and current learning. What Dewey (1938) had termed primary and secondary experiences informs this interactive process. The construction of new knowledge takes place within the framework of existing prior knowing, modifying and refining the prior knowledge we take to subsequent situations.

In an attempt to determine the role played by prior knowing in the ongoing construction of new learning in the professional year, the written and spoken thoughts of the participants were analyzed for instances of the interplay between the two processes.

The data sources used in this study included the language arts journals, the student teaching logs, fieldnotes based on student teaching observations, audio taped conversations following student teaching observations, and the post-teacher certification interviews. Data analysis yielded categories of considerations. Thematic analysis led to the construction of five inter-related themes. The five themes which emerged from the data were viewed as the guiding orientations of the participants' prior knowing in their ongoing considerations, as they experienced the professional year in the education program, and ultimately their reconsiderations as certified teachers.

The five thematic frameworks, grounded in the data collected for this study, represented an insight as to how the participants made sense of new learning in their professional year experiences based on their growing prior knowing about learning and teaching. A graphic overview of the five themes identified is presented in Figure 5-1, on page 69.

Figure 5-1

THEME ONE

CONSIDERING PRIOR EXPERIENCES:
Looking Back

as an elementary school student
as a parent
as a student teacher/pre-professional year

THEME TWO

CONSIDERING SELF:
Looking from the Known to the New

self as learner
what helps new learning
what hinders new learning
surprise at new learning

Prior Knowing <-------------------------------- --------------------------------> New Learning

THEME THREE
CONSIDERING PRACTICUM:
Anticipation and Reality

Anticipation
the first pro-year practicum
the projected 'fit' of new learning
the teaching of language arts
finding congruity
finding incongruity

Reality
being prepared
realizing the demands
managing a class
becoming flexible

THEME FOUR
CONSIDERING SIGNIFICANT OTHERS:
Accessing the Prior Knowing of Others

peers
sponsor teacher
professor
school staff
practicum supervisor
parents of pupils
being considered by others

THEME FIVE
CONSIDERING THE FUTURE:
Looking Forward

feeling like a teacher
self-doubts
confidence in a teaching future

Figure 5-1: Overview of thematic analysis.

The five themes revealed through the analysis of the data are as follows:

Theme Number One:

Considering Prior Experiences: Looking Back

This theme addresses the sources of the participants' prior knowing about teaching and the language arts, pre-dating their enrollment in the professional year of teacher education.

Theme Number Two:

Considering Self: Looking from the Known to the New

This theme addresses the participants' personal construction of new understandings in the language arts methodology course and as student teachers. New learning was grounded in the existing constructs of their individual prior knowing.

Theme Number Three:

Considering Practicum: Anticipation and Reality

This theme deals with the participants' prior knowing as it related to what it means to be a teacher. Prior knowing transacted with current learning in the language arts methodology course, practicum preparations and in the practicum classroom, and yielded aspects of both the anticipation of student teaching and the reality of student teaching.

Theme Number Four:

Considering Significant Others: Accessing the Prior Knowing of Others

This theme centres on the participants' prior and current knowing as it interacted with the prior knowing of significant others who were viewed as instrumental during the course of the professional year.

Theme Number Five:

Considering the Future: Looking Forward

The fifth theme focuses on the projected post-certification experiences of the participants as they neared the completion of the teacher education program. As such, it represents their accumulated bodies of prior knowing and new learning as they moved along the continuum of teacher education, from methodology students to student teachers to certified teachers and considered the future.

The five themes were not mutually exclusive but rather represented a helix of knowing, understanding and questioning that marked the participants' shared and individual journeys from education student to certified teacher.

Instances of each participant's own individualized experiential background of prior knowing, in an attempt to make sense of current learning, were coded as a prelude to thematic analysis. Journal statements which merely restated the content of the lectures were excluded, for example:

> Another thing I found interesting was not to use terms as "small" or "baby letters." Use upper & lower case & explain where these terms come from--very interesting. The letter "l" is not a "small letter."
> (4-LAJ-19-2-Oct. 21/94)

and

> Pattern books give students, especially young and new authors, an easily achieved target by which to attempt creating their own personal publication.
> (2-LAJ-19-Jan. 24/95)

Global statements which were not specific to the process of meaning making were also excluded, for example:

> I appreciated the writing seminar.
> (2-LAJ-11-1-Oct. 21/94)

Statements spoken or written by the participants which could compromise their anonymity were not included. As well, the names of peers, pupils, sponsor teachers and other school personnel were substituted with non-identifying, single initial letters.

In an attempt to render the quotes, as written or spoken by the participants, as understandable as possible for the reader, supplementary information inserted within their statements has been presented in brackets:

> On my [first professional year] practicum I was amazed at . . .
> (3-LAJ-18-3-Jan. 6/95)

Theme Number One

Considering Prior Experiences: Looking Back

> Each of us makes sense of our world by synthesizing new experiences into what we have previously come to understand. (Brooks & Brooks, 1993, p. 4)

Each of the six participants used their language arts journal to look back at particular aspects of their past, predating their enrollment in the professional year of the education program. The basis for the participants looking back involved three areas of prior knowing: reflecting on their own recall of being taught language arts as an elementary school student; experiences with their own children, if parents; and consideration of their past classroom practicum teaching experiences in the pre-professional year of teacher education. A graphic representation of theme one is presented in Figure 5-2.

Figure 5-2

THEME ONE

CONSIDERING PRIOR EXPERIENCES:
Looking Back

I. as an elementary school student
II. as a parent
III. as a student teacher/pre-professional year

Figure 5-2: Representation of theme number one.

I. As an elementary school student

> The positive progress this subject has shown since my school days is simply wonderful.
> (5-LAJ-30-6-March 14/95)

The notion of the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), the powerful influence of a priori assumptions (Valli, 1992), was strongly upheld in the participants' spontaneous recall of their own experiences with language arts as elementary school students. Each participant, with the exception of Karen who focussed on her own children, used their own memories of being an elementary school student as a reference point when considering current learning in what they chose to share in their language arts journal. The participants used their journal entries as an opportunity to recall negative aspects of their language arts experiences, which far outweighed positive memories.

Looking back with a critical eye

Harrison's memories of struggling with reading as a pupil prompted him to share the following:

> I can think of many books that I plodded through as a young elementary student with no hope of comprehension. It was just far beyond what I had encountered--the language and, many times, simply the situations. I have since gone back and read many of the books that caused me such difficulty and find that I missed so much. I hope to take this personal knowledge with me into my teaching. How important that we allow students to step from what they know into what is unknown. In every subject, and in every book, we need to offer them a place to stand and start from.
> (2-1-1-Sept. 9/94)

Harrison's written reflections on the novel study undertaken within the language arts methodology course support the position that childhood experiences with reading, in this case the rejection of realistic fiction, are contemporary influences years later:

> The story [novel: On My Honor] has been fascinating. I've been surprised at how it has grabbed my interest. When I

> was younger I hated 'real life' stories. I felt they sounded too much like grade 1 readers and looking back, perhaps they did. But this story is very engaging and it encourages me to actively pursue other such novels when I am reading to a class. It is because of my experience with this particular genre as a child that much of my personal interest in reading has focused in the realm of fantasy and science fiction. I would often turn down books of the 'real kind' because I thought they were boring. . . . I would not want this to be repeated for the students in my class.
> (2-3/4-4-Sept. 20/94)

Evans (1993) explored college students' literate life stories and found that many of his participants did not remember what they read in school and many reported disliking, even hating, reading associated with school. Michelle, similarly, traced her present dislike of reading to her experiences as a school student:

> Nancy [professor] read to the class out of a basal-style reader. It was scary to think that I learned to read using something very similar. It is no wonder that I never excelled in reading; I wasn't interested because it wasn't interesting. That trend has followed me into adulthood. The choice of reading material can have a life long impression (impact) on a student.
> (6-LAJ-1-1-Sept. 6/94)

She reiterated, in a subsequent entry:

> Reading to me has always been a struggle.
> (6-LAJ-1-2-Sept. 9/94)

and also shared the experiences of another struggling reader:

> I have a friend who was not introduced to phonics and she can't pronounce or sound out large (intimidating) words
> (6-LAJ-2-6-Sept.13/94)

Stormi recorded her memories about being discouraged as a school student by the mechanical presentation of creative writing:

> Poetry writing used to be presented in a dry, rules manner. Those who showed an initial spark of interest were turned off by the boring format rather than inspired by the fun methods. After today's class I think I can write both a haiku and a tanka poem.
> (5-LAJ-5-3-Sept. 23/94)

A language arts discussion of question and answer relationships prompted Stormi to compare this strategy with her own recollection of finding answers in text.

> Excellent idea! I know I would have benefitted from this knowledge as a child. I uselessly looked for everything in the story before giving up and trying to think on my own. This idea will save my students from wasting work time. I must remember it.
> (5-LAJ-13-4-Oct. 28/94)

Marie, too, turned to childhood classroom memories in an attempt to recall if a particular strategy had been taught:

> I see how important brainstorming is for image development--as a child I don't remember being taught this process.
> (3-LAJ-5-4-Sept. 23/94)

The topic of grammar, following a discussion on the English language, was explored by Stormi. She considered gaps in her prior knowing that made her uneasy in projected teaching situations:

> Today's class challenged my memory to try to remember grammar rules from over twenty years ago! I honestly do not think I learned some of these rules. Will today's class be enough to turn around and teach with, or will we be able to work with these in class a bit more? Many of the other concepts--such as morphemes or phonemes--were touched on in anthropology two years ago, so they were easier to recall.
> (5-LAJ-1/2-4-Sept.13/94)

Dawn shared her own strategy for entering text without attributing it to a particular classroom context. Because the imaging strategy worked for her, she projected its usefulness to the context of her future teaching:

> I remember imagining myself in a story I read (imagined actually being there). I loved to escape into what I viewed as an ideal world (even though it may or not be). So I think if children seem not to be able to do that, I would suggest it and tell them how exciting it is. Interest in a book is very important to be able to do this.
> (4-LAJ-1/2-4-Sept. 9/94)

She also related a self-developed approach to spelling:

> Letting kids make up their own ways to remember how to spell a word is very important. I would make up ones in grade 7 that would make no sense to anyone else, but they always worked for me.
> (4-LAJ-13-4-Oct.14/94)

Memories of routinized language arts assignments, doing but not understanding or being engaged, met with a critical eye. Learning about the importance of setting new learning within a meaningful context prompted Marie to recall:

> I remember having to look up words every week in the dictionary and write out the meaning. The task became quite mundane and wasn't a great learning experience because it just meant copying out definitions which I may or may not have understood. I never had to put the words into a sentence to see if I understood its meaning.
> (3-LAJ- 11 -3-Oct. 11/94)

and again, in the second semester of the course:

> What I remember of grammar in elementary/secondary school is exercises which had little meaning for me. Rules and sentence structure did not start to make real sense to me until I had graduated and began college. Little by little things have made sense for me.
> (3-LAJ- 31-2-March 7/95)

The topic of grammar also brought out negative feelings for Michelle. She recounted:

> Grammar, eh. Here I am at 30 something and still have a sour taste in my mouth about grammar and how it was taught to me. The ways you showed today were fun and educational.
> (6-LAJ-20-1-March 7/95)

That there is a tendency to teach as we were taught (Tardif, 1985) is exemplified in Stormi's considerations in the teaching of grammar:

> [Previously] I would probably have fallen back on my "childhood conditioning" and pumped out the old grammar worksheets.
> (5-LAJ-28-2-March 3/95)

Stormi's recollection of phonics and handwriting instruction also gave evidence of her current questioning of the meaningfulness of contextually isolated learning:

> I went through the phonics in isolation drills throughout the primary grades. Thank goodness the word families are familiar. I look forward to comparing my experiences with the drill method against these that I will be teaching.
> (5-LAJ-4-3-Sept. 16/94)

> I must confess that I am glad that the endless rows of a's and b's are over. That was not a particularly constructive way to use a half hour of valuable teaching time.
> (5-LAJ-12-1-Oct. 21/94)

A lecture which illustrated the merits of vocabulary instruction grounded in a meaningful context brought about Stormi's recall of her elementary school experiences:

> I do recall the list of words composed by the class, and then copied into our student notebook. I had no problem with this simply because I loved to write, however, after today I realize that this should be done in context so that a child can relate and use these rules to his own work.
> (5-LAJ-2-1-Sept. 13/94)

Dawn used her new learning as a benchmark for assessing her own learning experiences as an elementary school student. She shared her memories of a long-standing teaching tradition--the red pen:

> I like the idea of using a pencil on someone else's writing. I remember getting work back--the first thing you looked for was how much red ink there was. The more there was, the more you dreaded looking at your mark.
> (4-LA25-1-Jan. 20/95)

For Marie, being exposed to current language arts methodology provided the basis for a comparison of her own past and present teaching and learning:

> Teaching and learning are so much more exciting now than when I went to school.
> (3-LAJ-12-4-Oct. 18/94)

Harrison shared some of his past misconceptions about word attack strategies and handwriting, situations where his prior knowing was challenged by new learning. His recanting is illustrated through references to his previous beliefs:

> I really was surprised to see the use of references as one [word] attack method. What surprised me was that I felt that dictionaries and the like were word attack cop-outs.
> (2-LAJ-9-1-Oct. 14/94)

and

> I am very intimidated going into the classroom and instructing [hand]writing. The main reason would be that I never performed well in this area in my own school experience. . . . I always felt that manuscript was somehow

> less impressive than cursive. Thus, because I couldn't write cursively, I always felt devalued.
> (2-11-1-Oct. 21/94)

Looking back and finding connections

Conversely, a remembered childhood familiarity with current language arts learning served to prompt positive memories. After a lecture on directed reading activities, Harrison wrote:

> DRTA. I liked this when I was a child and find myself even now trying to guess and predict "What will happen next..."
> (2-13-1-Nov. 1/94)

Marie, too, used her language arts journal to share positive memories of being an elementary school student and in this instance current learning reinforced her intended teaching practice:

> The reading of the novel On My Honor brings back a lot of memories of the teacher reading to us. I will certainly read to my students.
> (3-4-6-Sept. 20/94)
>
> It has been so long since I've been read to that I feel like a child again when I hear a chapter from the novel each L.A. class.
> (3-5-1-Sept. 23/94)

The participants, with one exception, used their journal entries to recall their own experiences of being elementary school students--language arts learners. Prior knowing, when considered in the light of current learning, often resulted in the individual participant's looking back on their experiences with a critical eye. Feiman-Nemser and Remillard (1996) make reference to the "paradoxical role of prior beliefs" (p. 80) stating that currently held beliefs and constructs can serve as barriers to new learning or provide a framework for assimilating new, and sometimes contradictory, learning. Karen's journal entries contained no reference to her own recall of being an elementary pupil. This is perhaps accounted for by Zeichner and Gore (1990) who report that the role of personal life experiences are seen by some researchers to diminish over time, although an opposing point of view, presented by the same authors, contends that pretraining school experiences are in evidence even after as much as nine years of teaching.

Based on the participants' journal entries, the prior knowing brought to a language arts methodology course in the professional year indicated that these teacher candidates did retain strong impressions and memories of their elementary school experiences with language arts. Of the journal entries specifically related to their own prior knowing based on being school students, and in light of their current learning, the participants' recalled experiences were characterized by a tone of negativity. Their recollections are mirrored by Mahabir (1993), a student teacher, who wrote:

> In my schooling, I failed to see the connections in language arts. They were broken down into individual areas and taught separately. We learned about the rules of grammar, and completed written exercises using the defined rules in various sentences. Our weekly spelling tests came from the spelling textbook and not from our writing or the topics we were studying in class. We read silently at our desks from readers provided in our classroom. I never developed an

> interest in reading because I read irrelevant stories in elementary school (p. 23).

II. As a parent

Parents, writes van Manen (1991), are the original educators (p. xi). Three of the six participants were parents of children ranging in age from three to sixteen years. The two participants who had school-aged children often mentioned aspects of their children's educational experiences in relating their prior knowing to current learning in the language arts methodology class.

The voice of experience

Karen and Stormi each had three school-aged children and commented based on their own observations and experiences--their prior knowing as parents. At the end of the first class, Karen wrote:

> I must admit to having some confusing and conflicting thoughts and reactions to our public school system's language arts practices. Having three children (16, 14, 11) in the system has provided me with great exposure to different strategies and methodologies, however I am unsure of my own philosophy of teaching L.A.
> (1-LAJ-1-2-Sept. 9/94)

As a parent, Karen shared her previous experiences, and novice stance, in coming to terms with her own children's processes of learning to read and how they were being taught in the school:

> In my "motherhood coffee chats", the general view seemed to be that we were dealing with an "all or nothing" view. Reading was either taught by a whole language approach or

> a phonics approach. I must admit that I, too, felt this to be the case, not realizing there must be a blend of strategies.
> (1-LAJ-2-1-Sept. 14/94)

She also acknowledged her previous lack of knowledge in dealing with her daughter's early attempts at printing conventionally:

> I wish I had taken this course when my children were much younger. I remember my daughter coming home one day, having written everything in exact "mirror image." I was very worried that she was dyslexic!
> (1-LAJ-6-1-Sept. 23/94)

Karen's prior knowing, based on her school participation with her children, often formed the basis for her journal entries.

> I have had the opportunity of going to several "Young Author's" workshops with my middle daughter (several years ago), so have witnessed the publishing process in action from a child's point of view and now from an adult's point of view.
> (1-LAJ-27-1-Jan. 25/95)

Karen expressed confidence in helping her own child proofread her school work. Her prior knowing, as a parent, informed her as to what techniques proved most helpful, resulting in a conviction as to the merits of a particular strategy:

> Reading one's work aloud is a must. I make my oldest daughter do this often as what she writes and reads are usually quite different. She needs to hear herself (or me) say it aloud to understand her errors. Sometimes I need to read it to her to make her hear the pauses which are out of place, or too many, or not there at all.
> (1-LAJ-26-1-Jan. 20/95)

Topics discussed in the language arts methodology class, in this case vocabulary development, prompted Karen to set this new learning in the context of her own children's abilities:

> However, my children do have quite an extensive vocabulary due most probably to the large amount of reading they have done in their lives.
> (1-LAJ-31-4-Feb. 3/95)

Stormi set new learning in the context of observing her son's experiences with comprehending challenging informational text:

> Now I comprehend how my young son understood [factual] terminology. . .in the books he was reading. Through the interactive process he took everything he had seen [firsthand] and was able to relate this information to his blossoming understanding of the [factual] books he was reading.
> (5-LAJ 1-2-Sept. 9/94)

As a parent, Stormi expressed a confident familiarity with many aspects of children's language development, as well as classroom practices. She used actual exemplars to ground her learning:

> My own children enjoyed recreating favorite story forms in the form of a diorama, and I have seen some masterpieces assembled by members of a grade three class.
> (5-LAJ-3-4-Sept. 16/94)

> The topic of pocket charts for phonemic awareness was really a review for me as the teachers of all my children used them in interesting ways over the years and my grade

> one class last year used them daily. No doubt I will discover many more possibilities, too, as I use them with my own students.
> (5-LAJ- 4-2-Sept. 20/94)

Setting current language arts learning in the context of her children's experiences helped Stormi personalize her understanding of language development and developmental spelling stages:

> After witnessing my three children go through grammar development I realize how easily children seem to pick up the basic sentence patterns. The more I read to them, the more complex their sentences became.
> (5 LAJ-28-1-March 7/95)

> I love to watch the learning to spell and write stages for children's writing. . My own three children are avid readers and writers so have had first hand experience at reading all their squiggles--but now I know they were following actual stages.
> (5-LAJ-5-5-Sept. 23/94)

The two participants who were also parents of school-aged children showed an apparent ease and familiarity with a variety of language arts topics, techniques and strategies. Their language arts journal entries indicated that new learning found an immediate context in the realm of their own children's language arts experiences. Those participants who were also parents used their prior knowing as an immediately accessible framework in which to assess and analyze current learning. Their journal entries were characterized by a tone of knowing authority when situating their own children in language arts learning contexts. Lanier and Little

(1986, in McAninch & McAninch) offer evidence that "a widely held view among teacher candidates is that teaching is learned through experience and that it is closely related to parenting" (p. 386).

III. As a student teacher in a two-week pre-professional year practicum

Prior to their professional year, the six participants had each experienced a first, introductory student teaching practicum consisting of a two-week placement in an elementary classroom. This was, to date, their sole experience in the role of student teacher and three of the participants used this initial classroom teaching as a basis for commenting upon their prior knowing.

Michelle's sponsor teacher's language arts methods left a strong impression on her current views as to the role of phonics instruction:

> During my practicum last year I was in a grade one class. The strides that these children took through the year were phenomenal. Their teacher based their reading and writing in phonics. If I ever had any doubts before that class and that teacher's approach dispelled them.
> (6-LAJ-3-2-Sept. 13/94)

Marie used her current knowledge of developmental spelling to reconsider her sponsor teacher's practice, and to relate this experience to concept development in language arts methodology:

> I remember on my practicum last year (grade 1 /2 split) how the teacher had one spelling test for both grades, but had different levels of expectation as to how the words should be spelled. Most grade ones were spelling semi-

> phonetically, and the grade 2's were spelling phonetically/transitionally.
> (3 LAJ 6-1-2-Sept. 27/94)

Marie recounted her exposure to an author study she observed, illustrative of prior knowing reinforcing current learning:

> The librarian at the school I was at for my two week practicum was very enthusiastic about author studies as well as theme studies. I still remember her presenting Bill Peet books. The children were sold on this author for a while.
> (3-LAJ-28-2-Feb. 17/95)

The topic of developmental spelling and the prospect of being able to read invented spelling caused Dawn to reflect upon her sponsor teacher's expertise in carrying out this task. The power of the sponsor teacher as a teaching model, the teacher one wishes to become, is evident in the excerpt:

> I am excited about being able to read a message like RCRBRKD (our car broke down). My sponsor teacher did it so well, and I thought how I couldn't wait to be able to do that.
> (4-LAJ-5-2-Sept. 23/94)

Dawn had high praise for her sponsor teacher during the pre-professional year two-week student teaching practicum. The experience lessened the gap between education courses and the reality of the classroom:

> I feel I am very fortunate to have had good sponsor teachers who put what we learn in university into practice.

> I told my sponsor teacher last year she made my textbooks come alive--she's so modest though.
> (4-LAJ-20-3-Oct. 25/94).

The foregoing journal entries also support the expert-novice dichotomy, most often cited as the major distinction between the experienced teacher and the student teacher (Pintrich, 1990; Sparks-Langer, 1992; Howey and Zimpher, 1996). According to Kennard (1993), however, this dichotomy represents an entrenched myth all too readily acknowledged as the main distinction between student teacher and sponsor teacher. She contends that a sponsor teacher relationship with her student teacher led her to "understand the need to dismantle old ways of acting in my own teaching practice (p. 164)", but admitted that the expert-novice myth is fraught with the "authority and stature" (p. 172) afforded the tradition-laden sponsor teacher's role.

Stormi related current learning to a specific student in her pre-professional year practicum. She placed new knowledge in the context of what had been observed previously and was thus able to construct a meaningful connection between language arts coursework and the real happenings in a classroom:

> It makes sense that a child would need the ability to attend and persevere at a task in order to succeed in reading. My grade three class last year had the perfect example. Little David had a short attention span, and would not read silently at his desk for any length of time. His reading skills were not improving and his progress in class was slowed considerably. Even when the topic was of great interest to

> all the other students, he was still not motivated to read for any length of time.
> (5-LAJ-1-Sept. 9/94)

Overall, the participants made only limited references to their pre-professional year practicum experiences. Of note is the fact that none of the participants made any reference at all to the content, topics or their prior knowing from the introductory course in language arts, taken during their pre-professional year.

In terms of this situation, two considerations are seen as possible contributing factors. Firstly, the two week practicum focussed on lesson preparations based on the full year courses completed in the areas of music, art and drama. Guyton and Mcintyre (1990) write of the importance of "congruence between the on-campus courses and the experience of student teaching" (p. 516). Although the participants had also completed a one term course entitled "Introduction to Language Arts", the expectations for teaching any aspect of the language arts during the pre-professional year practicum experience remained vague and were not a specific requirement. As such, the participants lacked a cohesive, experiential background of prior knowing in teaching, or observing the sponsor teacher's teaching, of language arts in the elementary classroom. Karen used her journal writing to suggest:

> I feel we should spend more time in third year [the pre-professional year] on language arts. I realize we had a section [one term] of language arts last year but I feel in an education program, our exposure to language arts (reading, writing, literature, etc.) should be ongoing and indepth.

> Maybe some (lots) of time could be borrowed from drama and music?!!!
> (1-LAJ-15-5-Oct.14/94)

A second consideration is that the participants began a series of fall school visits, five weeks into their professional year. The purpose of these weekly, half day visits was to become familiar with their assigned practicum classroom in preparation for a first round of professional year student teaching, five weeks in duration. The participants were in a position to consider current language arts learning in the more immediate and accessible context of visits to their assigned practicum classrooms, rather than recalling experiences based on their brief, two week, pre-professional year student teaching.

Summary of Theme Number One

Considering Prior Experiences: Looking Back

A thematic analysis of the participants' language arts journals yielded three areas of prior knowing that were drawn upon as new learning took place within the context of a language arts methods course. Firstly, with the exception of Karen, each participant shared aspects of their own experiences as elementary school students which they considered to be relevant in the light of current learning. Their recall of the language arts instruction, as they experienced it, was for the most part negative. They related memories of learning presented in a contextually barren curriculum, using drills, worksheets and uninspiring reading materials. The participants shared feelings of being variously discouraged, disengaged and unmotivated. Positive recall and sharing was forthcoming when current learning converged with their prior knowing, for example, a familiar comprehension strategy and the experience of a teacher reading aloud to the class.

A second body of prior knowing which was brought to bear in the construction of new meaning was illuminated by those language arts participants who were also parents. Current learning was situated in an immediately available context by the two participants who shared the dual role of being both a mother of school aged children and an education student. Karen and Stormi reported positively on congruence between their prior knowing, based on their children's home and school experiences, and current learning. They both expressed a confident familiarity with a variety of topics presented during lectures. Michelle, mother of a young preschooler, did not use her son's learning as a basis for constructing new meaning in her language arts journal entries. This seems a reasonable scenario, given that her son had yet to enter school.

The third aspect of prior knowing identified in the participants' language arts journals was grounded in their pre-professional year, two-week practicum. Five of the six participants made reference to this, their first formal student teaching experience, in their considerations of current learning. Congruence of language arts methodology with the sponsor teachers' observed practices, admiration for the sponsor teachers' expertise, recall of a specific student, and a suggestion for additional language arts class time in the pre-professional year were all examples of the participants' considerations as they brought prior knowing into the realm of new learning.

Aspects of the participants' prior knowing which influenced and shaped new learning and meaning making centred on three aspects of their life experiences, predating their professional year in the education program. Based on entries in their language arts journals at the conclusion of each lecture and their student teaching logs, the participants' own individual experiences of being elementary school students, parents, novice education students and pre-professional year student teachers each affected, in varying degrees, the participants' considerations of current learning.

Theme Number Two

Considering Self: Looking from the Known to the New

> Encoded in our memory is knowledge about what our thoughts, affect and behavior were in past situations, and this self-knowledge can be used to guide us in new situations. (Pintrich, 1990, p. 837)

The participants' prior knowing of themselves as learners was made evident as they reflected and acted on the basis of current learning. Their descriptions of the personal circumstances under which they made new learning meaningful lent insight into their existing constructs, both as learners and as novice teachers.

As the participants considered and constructed new learning in the contexts of the language arts classes and student teaching practicum, an analysis of their shared insights yielded comments which increased understanding of their personal perceptions of their own learning and themselves as meaning-makers. Implicit in the phenomena of reflecting on new learning is the operation of metacognition--a "learner's awareness of their thoughts, beliefs and ways of coming to know about the processes of learning and teaching" (Bell & Gilbert,1996, p. 61). A consideration of prior knowing, the participants' existing framework of constructs, was an essential and overlapping component in furthering an awareness of their construction of new meaning.

Relevant to the participants' connections of prior knowing and current learning was their attention to the following four areas: self as learner; what helps new learning; what hinders new learning; and surprise at new learning. Figure 5-3 presents a graphic representation of theme number two.

Figure 5-3

THEME TWO

CONSIDERING SELF: Looking
from the Known to the New

I. self as learner
II. what helps new learning
III. what hinders new learning
IV. surprise at new learning

Figure 5-3: Representation of theme number two.

I. Self as learner

Learning by doing

The participants' written reflections made frequent mention of the value of, and their expressed need to experience, hands-on learning in the language arts methodology classes. Learning through direct experiences was perceived to be of importance for two reasons: to expand the breadth and depth of their own learning, and so that they could more fully understand what their future students would experience. The notion that preparation for and actual classroom teaching would be the most valuable teacher was especially recurrent in Marie's journal entries. She made numerous references which attested to her prior knowing of herself as a learner, and that learning by doing, learning through mistakes made, would be the most meaningful aspect of the professional year.

> I believe that the best way for me to learn how to teach phonics will be through actual experience and through some trial and error.
> (3-LAJ-4-5-Sept. 30/94)

> I agree that going through the writing process myself will be a valuable learning experience--to talk about something or learn about it in theory is different than actually experiencing it, especially because of my learning style.
> (3-LAJ-18-2-Jan. 6/95)

> Even though I am not terribly excited about the writing project, I think it will be a great experience, not only to bolster my confidence in writing, but also give me an idea of what my students experience.
> (3-LAJ-19-3-Jan. 10/95)

and

> I think that I'll learn more as a teacher in preparing and in my students' responses, than they actually will from my lessons.
> (3-LAJ-12-5-Oct. 18/94)

and

> I know that by having to teach handwriting, I'll learn the most!
> (3-LAJ-13-6-Oct. 21/94)

Harrison reported positively on a hands-on experience during his student teaching, the opportunity to put previously learned theory into practice. The opportunity to apply his prior knowing, based on language arts methodology lectures, resulted in a depth of understanding, applying both existing and new learning in a real-life context:

> The individual reading assessment was great. I developed my own notation techniques and was given the opportunity to practice. This was very informative and I am getting a feel for a grade 3 reading level.
> (2-STL-15-1-May 8/95)

The participants compared their own prior, existing learning preferences to the experiences and perceived needs of their future students:

> I, as a student, learn better if I'm not trying to concentrate on two things. If I was coloring while a story was being read, my mind might wander too much. Just because that's how I was, doesn't mean all children are like that, I suppose.
> (4-LAJ-10/11-3-Oct. 11/94).

Karen's personal notion of celebrating an author's efforts was projected into her intended classroom practice:

> A lot of time and energy is spent on your writing project and providing an opportunity to "show off" that work is important.
> (1-LAJ-27-2-Jan. 25/94)

Stormi viewed the upcoming practicum as an opportunity to practice and implement what she had learned and her return to the methodology class as a forum for clarification. Here, prior knowing was seen as a starting point for her first professional year practicum, with the added proviso that her knowing would, in fact, need to be supplemented and adjusted after her first professional year student teaching assignment was completed:

> We need to get out there and give all of our ideas a try, and then come back with oodles of questions and things to fix.
> (5-LAJ-15-3-Nov. 4/94)

II. What helps new learning

Participants used their language arts journals and student teaching logbook entries to share insights as to what factors enhanced their process of meaning making in the contexts of the university classroom as an education program student and as a student teacher in the elementary classroom. Prior knowing formed the foundation for their current learning and certain factors were identified as being most beneficial to this integration of new and existing knowing. These factors were modelling of teaching by the professor, examining educational materials used within and outside of the classroom, and creating scenarios for the immediate and projected application of current learning.

Modelling of teaching by the professor

In the language arts methodology course, the modelling of teaching strategies was viewed as a helpful factor in the participants' construction of meaning. Their prior knowing of how teachers teach was positively reinforced by their engagement in lectures designed to demonstrate a particular concept. Journal comments that spanned the professional year methodology course attested to the participants' perceptions that actually participating in a demonstration lesson contributed to their new learning:

> By the way, I like how you modelled the mini lesson. It's very concrete stuff!
> (4-LAJ-25-7-Jan. 17/95)

> I really like how you (Nancy) model for us when you teach. It's very concrete.
> (4-LAJ-28-2-Feb. 3/95)

> Today a revision conference was modelled to the class. I found it helpful to hear examples of questions that might be asked or suggestions that might be given.
> (3-LAJ-21-1-Jan. 17/95)

Based on her prior expectations, Karen intimated that engaging in education program activities sometimes involved a condescending attitude on the part of faculty:

> Most importantly, even though we are participating in writer's workshop, we are not being treated like children. Thank you for this.
> (1-LAJ-21-1-Jan. 11/95)

Activity based small group learning which allowed opportunities for peer interactions and active involvement was seen as contributing to meaning making, in ways perceived by the participants as less passive, more interactive, and non-threatening. Opportunities to access the prior knowing of their peers, while constructing their own new meaning, was viewed positively:

> It was nice to do the jigsaw today as it gets us moving and active.
> (6-LAJ-5-3-Sept. 20/94)
>
> It is helpful to have peer ideas given during brainstorming times because my limited horizons are expanded.
> (3-LAJ-19-2-Jan.10/95)
>
> What a good way to introduce limerick and free form. Working in groups to write the poetry was very nice. I didn't feel threatened to come up with a great poem myself. It was an experience to keep in mind when it comes time to teach poetry to children.
> (6-LAJ-7-4-Oct. 4/94)

Examining educational materials

An opportunity to examine and critique actual samples of elementary pupils' writing, resources used by practicing teachers, and commercial educational materials was perceived to assist in bridging theoretical learning to the reality of the classroom.

Materials from the classroom also provided a bridge from tentative prior knowing to current learning through vicarious experiences:

> It was great practice to look at samples of children's writing and figure out their possible stages.
> (4-LAJ-9-1-Oct. 3/94)
>
> The scope and sequence chart will be a wonderful guide. Finally I can visualize exactly which direction I should be heading in with my class. A checklist style is so convenient for quickly scanning the class's progress. This is one student teacher who is thankful for all the other teachers out there who share!
> (5-LAJ-28-4-March 10/95)

Once a language arts concept was made personally meaningful, the participants expressed a tone of confidence and ownership, a sense that their prior knowing now encompassed not only what they would teach but also how they would teach it:

> There are so many ideas for teaching phonics! I can't wait to begin using them--the pocket charts, having the children make poems out of cards with words on them, song books, poem books, the first snowfall. The great thing, I think, about teaching is new things will always be popping up lending themselves to new ideas and opportunities. I really can't wait.
> (4-LAJ-4-2-Sept. 20/94)

Prior knowing reflected an unquestioning assumption that learning materials advertised as 'educational' were superior in terms of pupil learning. An actual demonstration of a commercial phonics program served to enhance current learning as the participants compared their prior expectations to a disappointing product, and in Stormi's case prompted her to come up with alternatives:

> After some experimentation and consideration [a commercial phonics program] comes up a loser. For $300.00 there is a wide variety of books, tapes or programs available that would hold children's attention much better. I was grateful for the introduction, though, for now I know it is not some miracle program.
> (5-LAJ-3-5-Sept. 16/94)

Harrison and Karen both expressed surprise and disappointment that the widely advertised product thought to be sound, based on their prior knowing, was instead a rote learning and repetitive program:

> I am truly surprised to find out how poor [the commercial] program really was. I was definitely expecting something much better. I had suspected that it was only teaching word attack skills, but I had assumed it was done in a very interesting and stimulating manner for children. When we listened to the tapes and I heard what kids were expected to listen to I was shocked. First of all, it sounded like brainwashing techniques and secondly, it was boring.
> (2-LAJ-3-1-Sept. 16/94)

> A valuable class! I was very curious about the [phonics] material--now I am just simply appalled! Bringing this material to education students (and teachers) attention is a good idea in order that "word of mouth" might counter-balance television advertising.
> (1-LAJ-2a-1-Sept. 16/94)

Projecting and applying new learning

Michelle, the mother of a preschooler, reported back on a handwriting session with her young son, based on her new learning.

> My 3 1/2 year old son has difficulty in holding a pen and writing, therefore it is not his favorite thing to do. I went home after the class and together we sat down with pen and paper and started "writing." I showed him the [alternate] grip and I think he's sold. Finally!! Hopefully now he will enjoy writing and still have some control over the instrument. We actually practiced the number 4 with some success. The lecture was worth it just for that info.
> (6-LAJ-10-2-Oct. 21/94)

Michelle's prior experience, based on home-based pencil and paper activities with her pre-school son, is evidenced through this shared incident. Michelle used her new learning to encourage her son to explore handwriting and illustrated that current learning in language arts methodology extended into the home and provided her an opportunity for real life, and immediate, application and evaluation.

The content of lectures which contained references to actual classroom practice were the basis for the integration of new learning with prior knowing. Projected classroom application of the current learning was viewed as enhancing meaning making. The participants often cited a definite starting point, previously familiar, in this case a novel study. Current learning, exploring the myriad of possibilities for teaching a novel study, served to expand and refine their prior knowing:

> Beginning to read a novel, and discussing the numerous possibilities for teaching while doing so, is a great way to

> introduce us to the variety of methods available. We can then determine what would or would nor work with the story line or our particular students.
> (6-LAJ-2/3-5-Sept. 16/94)

The practicality of new learning was gauged by its potential use in the practicum classroom. Prior knowing, based on weekly classroom observations, formed the basis for an assessment of the utility of current learning:

> Nancy, it is practical applications (ie using semantic mapping) such as these that education students need at this point in the semester [preparing for fall practicum].
> (1-LAJ-18-4-Oct. 26/94)

> The why, when and how rule is a good resource to fall back on as I try to figure out phonics teaching. When in doubt I will go through these three questions.
> (5-LAJ-3-6-Sept. 16/94)

Participation in the actual strategies presented during language arts lectures helped the participants to more concretely envision its future translation into classroom practice. Dawn indicated that actually taking part in a Readers' Theatre activity had added to her repertoire of prior knowing:

> I enjoyed doing Reader's Theatre so I know children would. It really helps to put yourself in the role.
> (4-LAJ-8-1-Sept. 30/94)

Although the prior knowing of the participants included the irregularities of English language spelling, current learning augmented existing knowledge through learning about methodology:

> I also will, most definitely, use an "Exceptions to the Rule" board in my class. I think this is a great idea. When a child brings in a word that does not fit on the "word family" list, he/she still has a place to put it and celebrate it.
> (4-LAJ-2-4-Sept. 13/94)

III. What hinders new learning

The process of meaning making, situating current learning in the realm of what is already known, was seen to become less than optimal due to four factors identified by the participants. Based on their prior knowing of themselves as learners, new learning was seen to be compromised by insufficient time, insufficient prior knowing, feelings of uncertainty, and nebulous understanding.

Too little time

The participants brought with them to the teacher education program attitudes towards, and expectations about, time factors, both internally imposed upon the participants by themselves or externally imposed by the timelines of the professional year. Lack of time was a prevailing concern of each of the participants and was cited as a factor which interfered with the integration of new learning with their prior knowing. They made frequent mention of their perceived lack of time within the language arts course. A lecture which focussed on pupils' spelling in their written work culminated with time allotted for the perusal of actual examples from a variety of classrooms and grade levels. Karen, for example, expressed her need for more time, an insight into how she learned most effectively and thoroughly colored by her prior knowing:

> I wish we had more time [looking at pupils' spelling samples]! (as always--so much to know, so little time) (1-LAJ-10-2-Oct. 5/94)

Twenty minutes were allocated for students, in groups of three, to present an assigned poetry format to their peers. Marie and Stormi's journal entries attest to feelings of being constrained and rushed, feelings which overshadowed the intended outcome of the assignment:

> I felt that for the lesson on free verse [my group] and I taught, twenty minutes did not do the topic justice. (3-LAJ-8-6-Oct. 4/94)

> I was disappointed with our [peer teaching] diamante however. We had a great lesson written up, but at the last minute someone decided we had to include the class collaboration. Wrong decision. True, all the steps were required on the assignment, but there just was not time. (5-LAJ-6-5-Sept. 27/94)

Similarly, an assignment intended to provide firsthand experiences based on a process writing approach found Marie more concerned with time constraints than her considerations as an author:

> I have been finding the writing process rushed, probably because of the length of my story. I could revise my story

> several times, but there is a limited amount of time available to do that.
> (3-LAJ-21-1-Jan. 20/95)

Author's chair, a two hour celebration of writing shared by volunteer authors, was reported by Marie to be a less than optimal learning experience for her. Feelings of being hurried, and tight scheduling to accommodate the roster of those who signed up to read, served to distract her from the original intent of the culmination of the project. In this case, Marie's concern with being a rushed learner served to disengage, rather than engage, her as a learner:

> The length of the Tea House [author's chair readings] was a minus for me in the sense that it was difficult to concentrate the whole two hours. Also, some authors felt they needed to rush to accommodate for the number of authors yet to read and the limited time. These stories could have been presented much more effectively if time was taken in reading effectively. How a story is read certainly affects how the audience receives it. These are some considerations I would bring into my classroom when setting up a Tea House Reading period.
> (3-LAJ-24-2-Jan. 27/95)

This perception was also shared by Harrison:

> I don't think I would try to do as many readings in a 1 block period of time as was done in our class. I really couldn't appreciate the works as we came to the end of a lengthy class. Spacing & pacing would be the key.
> (2-LAJ-20-2-Jan. 27/95)

Karen and Michelle used their language arts journal entries to share incidents which reflected the necessity of juggling course demands with personal demands. Prior knowing appeared to be a factor in priorizing demands and making a judgement in each case as to where to expend their limited time:

> Everyone has left (18) to see the salmon run at the Adams River. I stayed behind to do homework and to attempt to get caught up.
> (1-LAF-13-1-Oct. 8/94, a Saturday morning)
>
> I missed class today. Unfortunately my son has asthma and when I went to cook hot dogs for his 4th birthday at the daycare I found him in the middle of an asthma attack. Needless to say I took him home.
> (6-LAJ-15-4-Jan. 20/95)

Lack of time, within the entire professional year program, was frequently cited as a drawback and ran counter to previous expectations of more time within courses:

> This semester has been quite informative for me despite the little time we have had for classes.
> (3-LAJ-17-1-Nov. 4/94)

As the first and final student teaching practica drew nearer, the participants adopted a practicum-driven focus. Focussed prior knowing was required to interact with continued new methodology learning. The combination of participating in education classes while planning and developing unit plans for their student teaching was found to be demanding. Harrison wrote of feeling torn by the expectations:

> Great semester. I'm glad it's over but feel I actually learned. My only suggestion would be to give longer classes in the first part of the semester so that we could utilize this last part for planning. I feel that I wasn't applying myself fully to class work, being so distracted by planning.
> (2-LAJ-14-1-Nov. 4/95)

Stormi shared feelings of being overwhelmed by the education program's scheduling of course requirements and the simultaneous expectations for comprehensive student teaching planning. She commented, before her first practicum assignment:

> Unit and lesson planning is coming along very slowly. Why in the world do we have to do both--mid-term exams or papers, and our first major attempt at lesson planning at the same time? Makes no sense to have 60 students over-stressed, over-tired, and ready to snap at anyone. A better job would be done by all if we could concentrate on learning how to do these lesson plans separately without the other stresses.
> (5-LAJ-13/14-5-Oct. 28/94)

and again before her second, and final, round of student teaching:

> I am very worried about the final exam. Scheduling exams for the day after classes end, and as unit and lesson plans are coming due, puts the students at a very unfortunate disadvantage. Reading a year's worth of notes over quickly the night before and rushing in to write one exam after another appeals to many in our class, but there are a few of us who desperately need more time than this--especially some time that is not already so overly stressful. Perhaps

> next year you could plead with the other instructors to give the students two or three days to study, or at least gather their thoughts?
> (5-LAJ-291-March 10/95)

Underlying the participants' preoccupation with 'never enough time' was a common charge: meaning making, the bringing together of what was known with what was new, was too often experienced in a hurried, less than optimal learning environment. Karen returned from the Christmas break to begin the second semester of education course work and recorded her ongoing lament of too little time:

> Yet another feeling of "so much to learn, so little time!"
> (1-LAJ-20-1-Jan. 6/95)

Is my prior knowing sufficient?

The ultimate learning by doing in the professional year of teacher education was understood by the participants as the practicum experiences. Feinman-Nemser and Remillard (1996) assert that not being able to answer questions posed by pupils in their practicum classrooms is a common source of concern of education students. The participants used their language arts journals, student teaching logs, and post-teaching discussions to express and address self doubts about various aspects of knowing enough. Michelle questioned her own and others' preparedness to teach concepts they had not yet mastered:

> Today our mini-lesson on commas added confusion to a process I thought I had mastered long ago. Obviously most of us need work on these basic rules. How can we try

> teaching students things we are not confident or competent in?
> (6-LAJ-20-3-Jan. 20/95)

In the context of the practicum classroom, Karen considered her inability to spontaneously, and correctly, respond to a student's question about solar eclipses. Her student teaching log entry illustrates her reflections on feelings of inadequate prior knowing:

> I also am afraid of being stumped by the kids, and not being able to answer their questions (especially in front of an adult). For instance, someone brought up an eclipse and wanted to know how they worked?????? I'm afraid I have a vague understanding, but would be disgraceful at attempting to explain it This was not in the background reading for today's lesson. I feel sooooo stupid sometimes. Where is my retention? Didn't I learn anything at school?
> (1-STL-6-7-April 10/95)

Our audio-taped discussion revisited Karen's concerns, and explored strategies to take the pressure off herself in terms of 'having to know it all':

> K: My lesson. . I am learning about how much skill--it takes so long to think about it and put it together and then all of the background reading, like I'm teaching them weather and it did go very well yesterday but I thought how--[what] do I do about [student] questions?
> N: Someone asked you about eclipses?
> K: Yeah.
> N: You don't have to know it all.
> (1-AT-April 11/95)

Harrison was led to consider strategies to address his lack of spelling metacognition in the following exchange after an observation of his teaching lesson. In this example, his prior knowing was inadequate:

> N: Now you have a spelling dictionary--good for you because you're not going to be happy about what I'm going to tell you.
> H: Uh-oh, what happened?
> N: Height and weight.
> H: Are...h-i-e-g-h-t right? No?
> N: Let me just get a pen and I'll tell you how you can remember that. Do you know the rule for i-e?
> H: Yeah.
> N: Okay, tell me.
> H: It's i before e except after c, . . . for neighbor and weigh. But not height though.
> N: Height, i before e --it's just . . . it's a rule breaker.
> H: Ah, one of them ones.
> Pause
> H: Height is...heighten. . . the same thing-h-e-i
> N: Right, right, right. And for weight you can remember because there is eight in there.
> H: Yeah, actually I usually remember eight. I don't know why I just--Did I put it on the board like that?
> N: Yes.
> H: Eee
> N: So go back and change that, or maybe tell, tell the kids that you've made a mistake, or I don't know how you want to handle that, but it's really--
> H: Well, they know I can't spell very well 'cause I always look in the dictionary when I talk to them.
> N: Or even modeling--looking it up. Anything, uh Harrison, anything that strikes you as what you need to know.

> H: Right, well that's why I brought this [spelling resource book] 'cause I will look in it right away if I feel uh, [that] I don't know.
> (2-AT-April 12/95)

Feeling unsure

Current learning was hampered by prior knowing when the participants' disposition focussed on the professor's role as being one of judge. Within the context of the language arts methodology course, Karen mused over feeling unsure of assignment demands. In considering her prior knowing of herself as a learner, she confided her need for clearly stipulated expectations to ease her feelings of discomfort in the arena of new learning:

> [re writers' workshop assignment] However, I do find this a difficult task. Perhaps the biggest reason for my difficulties is the lack of boundaries for the length of the paper. I'm quite a structured person and work well when I have defined boundaries--the unknown or uncertain sometimes throws me off.
> (1-LAJ-21-3-Jan. 11/95)

Stormi felt unsure after writing an in-class test. Her comments revealed the lens through which she viewed exam taking and marks:

> The test, of course, was stressful. Marks put too much pressure on students.
> (5-LAJ-9-3-Oct. 7/94)

Nebulous understanding

Indications of nebulous understanding and confusion were detected in some journal entries. Although such entries were infrequent, they pointed to a lack of clarity in how the participants' made sense of new learning in light of their existing knowing:

> [following a lecture on punctuation] Students need to develop their inner ears and this helps focus that understanding of language movement.
> (2-LAJ-18-2-Jan. 20/95)

> I wish dictionaries had a standard pronunciation legend. It would make it a whole lot simpler!
> (4-LAJ-13-4-Oct. 14/94)

> I found the etymology dictionary very confusing. I think a word origin dictionary could be more interesting if it was written in a more accessible language.
> (2-LAJ-21-1-Feb. 7/95)

IV. Surprise at new learning

All participants used their language arts journal and student teaching log to share instances of their surprise at new learning. Pre-existing assumptions, based on prior knowing, were challenged through new learning. Grimmett (1988) states that "reflection arises from a directly experienced situation which puzzles or surprises us" (p. 6). The process of integrating what is known with what is new was illustrated clearly as the participants revealed their former and present stances on a variety of topics.

I used to think that . . .

An activity based workshop on handwriting in the elementary classroom prompted the sharing of previously held understandings. Dawn's new learning addressed her notion of the existence of "one" correct methodology as opposed to the possibilities of options.

> I thought there was only one proper way to write and print letters. Well, you learn something new every day. I'm actually relieved because I still need practice making w's and a few other letters.
> (4-LAJ-14-1-Oct. 18/94)

> I didn't know there was a correct way to hold chalk. I have always held it like a pen or pencil. I need more practice!
> (4-LAF-18-1-Oct. 21/94)

Similarly, Stormi shared her growing knowledge of a range of alternative strategies in teaching word attack skills. Limited prior knowing consisted of two methods of identifying an unknown word:

> I often used to say "Let's sound it out" or "Find a dictionary", but now I see there are problems with both of these methods. I will have to teach many of these methods so that the students can choose one that suits their style.
> (5-LAJ-10-2-Oct. 14/94)

Marie questioned her previously held beliefs concerning the listening behaviors of students, based upon her observation of her peers and projecting her current insights into her future classroom:

> As the novel was being read to us, I noticed some people fidgeting, moving. . .and as a teacher, I feel this may have

> been a concern if I were to read to my class. My view is different now as I have learned that some people need to have something else (stimulus?) in order to really listen.
> (3-LAJ-3-2-Sept. 16/94)

Dawn compared her previously held views on correct spelling with her new understandings, based on current learning:

> I used to think you should correct their spelling, but realizing the developmental process of spelling, messages like RCRBCD are fine for that level. You're able to see the thought going into the work (what they're hearing) rather than saying "That's wrong."
> (4-LAJ-6-2-Sept. 23/94)

New learning, in this case on the proper use of commas, became a source of clarification for Dawn's incomplete prior knowing. She reinforced her understanding by paraphrasing the main point of the mini-lesson:

> Your mini-lesson on commas was very interesting, not to mention controversial. I learned something new--if the last item in a series of words or phrases is unexpected, use a comma before "and", if not, don't.
> (4-LAJ-25-2-Jan. 20/95)

Karen expressed surprise at her changed attitude toward poetry. Activity based peer interactions, combined with successful experimentation, resulted in her questioning of previously held beliefs:

> I thought I hated poetry (strong word but it represents my recollections). But I have really enjoyed learning about

> these different poetry forms and enjoy trying to come up with some poems on my own.
> (1-LAJ-9-1-Sept. 30/94)

Dawn viewed her own leaning process, being a more expert writer than her pupils, as a source of insight into expectations of herself as a learner. Her expert status did not make the writing process less time-consuming:

> It surprises me that although I may be more proficient in the writing process than children, I take much longer to write a story.
> (3-LAJ-20-1-Jan. 13/95)

Summary of Theme Number Two

Considering Self: Looking from the Known to the New

> Watching her [sponsor teacher] do writer's workshop and learning about it now brings everything together. Now I get it. We have so much to learn.
> (4-LAJ-22-2-Jan. 6/95)

New learning was constructed on the basis of what was already, however tentatively, known. As the participants integrated their existing knowing--what is known--with their current learning --what is new--, their written and spoken reflections provided insights as to how new meaning was constructed on the foundations of their prior knowing. Their comments provided insights into their understandings of themselves as learners, factors which enhanced the construction of new meaning, factors which hindered the construction of new learning, and surprise at new learning.

The participants' considerations of self as learner centered around a common assumption: the high priority of valuing experiential learning. Methodology instruction in the language arts was seen as supplementing and providing a bridge between their prior knowing and preparation for actual classroom teaching. They expressed the belief that their active participation in language arts methodology lectures and demonstrations would parallel and heighten their awareness as to what their future students would experience. Marie's language arts journal entries attested to her ongoing conviction that classroom teaching would provide her with the most valuable and practical knowledge. Their own preferences as learners were projected to be the preferences of their future pupils. Karen, for example, expressed her need to "show off" a language arts project she was proud of and transferred that need to her future elementary school pupils.

Current learning was enhanced in the language arts methodology course and the practicum classroom by a variety of factors. Learning by doing, being an active participant in the construction of one's own knowledge, was frequently cited as contributing positively to understanding. This view supports the constructivist view of the learners' knowledge construction--world making in concert, and in a contextually appropriate balance, with world receiving (Bruner, 1986). This stance additionally addresses the complex role of the teacher educator and practicum supervisor--coordinating the transmission of knowledge with the learner's invention of knowledge and making time and opportunities available for both processes. Prior knowing provided the framework for receiving new learning and creating personally relevant meaning.

Peers, and their own prior knowing, were viewed as a positive influence in the construction of new learning, as the participants accommodated what was personally known with what was new. They were cited as valued co-participants in group activities and as a source of new input in class discussions.

The participants brought with them to teacher education their own beliefs about the use and pressures of time. New learning was hindered for all six participants by their perceptions of "too little time." Their language arts journal entries, student teaching logs, and audio-taped discussions were indicative of time constraints and time pressures throughout the entire professional year. The participants were particularly sensitive to being "rushed" in the language arts methodology lectures in group presentation situations and in an author's chair celebration. Their frank comments revealed, and attested to, the presence of a hidden agenda in teacher education (Ginsburg and Clift, 1990): contradictory, although unintended, messages, in this case about honoring the process of the individual learner yet doing so within structured, and overly ambitious, time allotments.

The meaning making transaction of new learning and prior knowing was additionally hampered by what the participants viewed as divergent and multiple expectations. The methodology courses' demands of assignments and exams overlapped with department expectations for comprehensive practicum preparations. Lesson plans, unit plans, coordination with sponsor teacher expectations, and the final approval of teaching plans by their practicum supervisors resulted in the participants' shared impressions of diverse and sometimes overwhelming expectations to be met within an imposed time frame.

Feeling unsure, especially in the context of student teaching, was triggered by feelings of not knowing enough, inadequate prior knowing. Ginsburg and Clift (1990) cite the myth of "right answerism" (p. 456), as in Karen's feelings of inadequacy in not being able to spontaneously answer a pupil's question about solar eclipses. Harrison, though, was observed in a teaching situation where he was oblivious to the fact that his own prior understanding of a spelling application was inadequate. In this instance, his feeling unsure about his prior knowing was instigated during his post-teaching discussion.

Exams and assignments in the language arts course were additionally cited as unsettling, hampering current learning on the basis of student affect. Here, too, prior knowing formed a lens through which the participants responded to course demands.

Surprise at new learning, where "something falls outside the range of ordinary expectations" (Schön, 1983, p. 68) was the impetus for questioning, and realigning, prior knowing and provided opportunities for the participants to reexamine and reorganize their existing constructs. As illustrated by the variety of topics chosen by the participants for consideration in their journal entries, this is a highly individualistic process. "Contradictions are constructed by learners. Teachers cannot know what will be perceived as contradiction by students; this is an internal process" (Brooks &

Brooks, p. 112). What surprises one education student may well be merely a review or confirmation for another. Surprise at new learning related directly back to the participants' questioning of previously accepted prior knowing.

The professional year, as presented in light of the participants' considerations of themselves as learners, reiterates the pervasive influence of prior knowing on the construction of new learning. Meaning making by each participant, in the contexts of the language methodology course and the practicum teaching experience, underscored the continual interplay of what was known as it was related, and realigned, to accommodate what was new.

Theme Number Three

Considering Practicum: Anticipation and Reality Grounded in Prior Knowing and New Learning

> Day Thirty-Two [last language arts course lecture]--Yahoo! This has been such a great class. I was always hooked on L.A. but now feel prepared to bring that same feeling into the lives of the students. Thanx!
> (6-LAJ-20-2-Mar. 10/95)

> Through the notion of pedagogy we should try to further our understanding of what is essential to the excellence of our educational lives with children. (van Manen, 1991, p.30)

The foregoing quotes feature the voices of Michelle, a novice teacher, based on the anticipation of her final student teaching experience, and the experienced educator, grounded in his interpretations as to the nature of the pedagogical experience. They are, however, inexorably unified in their concern for, and consideration of, the educational lives of the pupils in our classrooms. Their words exemplify an individualized, yet overlapping, prior knowing as to the role of the educator in relation to one's pupils. Pedagogy, "the science and art of teaching" (Avis, 1974, p. 993), is the primary unifying intent of teacher educators and teacher education students alike.

Our prior knowing forms the basis for the anticipation of new experiences. In the participants' professional year, it was the anticipation of, and planning preparations for, two practicum experiences, fall and spring, that became the abiding focus of their language arts journal considerations. The ongoing interplay between what was known, in theory, and what was anticipated to be expected, once in the practicum classroom, yielded aspects of both the excitement and trepidation experienced by the participants.

A marked division of pedagogical considerations was evident as the professional year progressed. An anticipation of student teaching, based on prior knowing and often idealistic conceptions, was replaced, once student teaching commenced, with the immediate realities of student teaching, often removed from the curriculum and instruction emphasis of methodology course work. The reality of student teaching was often viewed as 'learning on the job', and new, often rapid, learning was accommodated into the existing constructs of the participants' prior knowing. This theme was explored from the vantage point of the participants' two stances in considering professional year student teaching: the anticipation and the reality.

A graphic representation of theme number three is presented in Figure 5-4.

Figure 5-4

THEME THREE

CONSIDERING PRACTICUM:

Anticipation and Reality

Anticipation

I. the first professional year practicum
II. the projected 'fit' of new learning
III. the teaching of language arts
IV. finding congruity
V. finding incongruity

Reality

I. being prepared
II. realizing the demands
III. managing a class
IV. becoming flexible

Figure 5-4: Representation of theme number three.

Considering practicum: the anticipation

This section deals with the participants' prior knowing as it related to what it means to be a teacher, encompassing the anticipation of, and preparations for, their final student teaching experiences. Prior knowing transacted with current learning in the language arts methodology course and in the weekly observational visits to the designated practicum classroom. The participants' anticipation of their forthcoming student teaching experiences were based on considerations of their prior knowing of their first professional year practicum, of the projected 'fit' of current learning with practicum preparations, of the teaching of language arts, and the congruity and the incongruity of methodology with their practicum classroom.

I. The first professional year practicum

Prior to their first professional year practicum, intents of a global nature were evident in the participants' considerations of teaching and learning. The journal entries here underlie beliefs held, prior knowing, about the teacher's role in engaging pupils:

> I want kids to understand that learning is not mundane--at least it doesn't have to be.
> (4-LAJ-1-3-Sept. 9/94)

> It excites me to think about applying myself to make learning fun.
> (2-LAJ-10-3-Oct. 18/94)

and about the prior knowing brought to the classroom by the teacher:

> I think a lot of teaching is common sense.
> (4-LAJ-8-1-Oct. 3/94)

Immediately prior to her first professional year practicum, Marie's journal entry affirms her anticipation as to the coming demands of student teaching:

> Sometimes I feel so idealistic and I want so much to be the best teacher possible right away but I think I will become the best teacher I can be through risk-taking, experience, hard work and most of all through having a positive attitude and keeping the students' needs at heart.
> (3-LAJ-12-3-Oct. 18/94)

At its conclusion, Marie's first professional year practicum, now a source of her prior knowing, contributed to her current awareness of the variations in abilities she would encounter within her subsequent practicum classroom. This experience added insights into her projections of teaching poor and reluctant writers:

> On my [first professional year] practicum I was amazed at the poor writing skills many of my students had. I also realized that students were much more motivated to write about something they wanted to know, or knew already.
> (3-LAJ-18-3-Jan. 6/95)

The participants looked back to their completed five week fall term practicum in order to consider their student teaching experiences in teaching language arts. This prior knowing was brought to bear in the context of current learning in the methodology lectures. Harrison and Stormi commented on the agreement between prior knowing, methodology learning and practice:

> I liked the idea of including word brainstorming ideas. On my last practicum, we would pick words and brainstorm them on the board. Once you got kids going, you couldn't stop them. It made a big difference in their writing when you I.D.'d tired words.
> (2-LAJ-17-1-Jan. 13/95)

> Not everyone feels comfortable sharing their written work, as I found out in my grade 4 class. The sign-up list on the blackboard was an excellent way to avoid this problem. (Although we somehow have to ease them over their discomfort with sharing eventually).
> (5-LAJ-16-2-Jan. 6/95)

Stormi considered the differences between her two professional year classrooms. Her prior knowing helped her to anticipate an expected scrutiny of her assessment techniques:

> This class is from a very different socio-economic background than was my previous class. They are far more concerned with marks here.
> (5-STL-2-4-March 30/95)

II. The projected 'fit' of current learning

Practicum placements were posted five weeks after the professional year fall and winter terms were underway. Once the participants had been assigned to their respective practicum classrooms and had begun their weekly observational visits, the practicum-driven nature of the professional year became clearly evident. The prospect of their professional year practica, five and seven weeks in duration, caused the participants to consider the reality of teaching the language arts, not in the abstract, but in the context of their assigned elementary classrooms. They questioned their preparedness, in essence whether their prior knowing would be adequate in the light of classroom teaching:

> Having now had an opportunity to visit my practicum class, I feel slightly (?!) overwhelmed by how much I need to discover about children's abilities (or lack thereof) in the spelling, reading handwriting areas.
> (1-LAJ-10/11-1-Oct. 5/94)

while anticipating the span of learning needs of the pupils in their charge:

> My main concern right now is how to make activity-based learning successful in a classroom of quite unfocussed, energetic grade 1's and 2's of varying abilities.
> (1-LAJ-17-3-Oct. 19/94)

Current learning transacted with prior knowing and was evaluated by its projected match with the participants' assigned practicum classrooms:

> I look forward to learning much more about the writing process as it will fit in nicely with my final practicum which hopefully will be grade 3 or 4.
> (1-LAJ-19-3-Jan. 4/95)

The participants became increasingly discerning of the content of the language arts methodology lectures. Their prior knowing centred on the requirements of the practicum and their journal entries pointed to a continual weighing of what was known and what still needed to be known. Compatibility of lectures with a particular student teaching agenda, planning, was deemed a valuable contribution to current learning:

> I have been struggling with finding a way to introduce "Christmas Around the World" with my grade 1/2 class. Today's lesson provided me with a wonderful starting point!
> (1-LAJ-18-1-Oct. 26/94)

Current learning provided Marie with a methodological strategy for integrating drama with language arts. That she had previously attempted to do this by accessing her prior knowing is clearly illustrated in her phrase, "I was trying to think of ways...":

> I hope to be able to try this activity [Readers' Theatre] in my grade five classroom during my practicum. I was trying to think of ways I could integrate drama into the curriculum and this is definitely one way that I plan to.
> (3-LAJ-7-4-Sept. 30/94)

The participants' appraised their professional year progress in terms of their feelings of preparedness to enter their practicum classrooms. A prevailing assumption was based on the belief that a 'good' teacher is thoroughly planned, before stepping into the classroom. Their preparations centred upon planning a unit of instruction for every curriculum area to be taught, accompanied by the first three lesson plans for each subject. Being adequately 'planned' was equated to a measure of progress in practicum preparations:

> Finally things are coming together in terms of planning.
> (4-LAJ-10-1-Oct. 11/94)

New learning was also judged by the timeliness of its presentation and its application to the planning process. Sufficient prior knowing was viewed as essential for comprehensive practicum preparation:

> Worked on reading again today. Good class but it would have been useful to have access to this info. prior to doing our units [in preparation for student teaching].
> (6-LAJ-13-1-Nov. 4/94

III. The teaching of language arts

An ongoing process of anticipatory projection of new language arts methodology learning to the context of the practicum classroom was evident in the participants' journal entries. The participants' considerations of new learning served to shape and firm their intentions in regard to their future teaching of the language arts.

They used their language arts journal entries to assess their existing knowing and current learning and to project themselves into their upcoming practicum teaching situations. As they accommodated new learning into existing prior knowing, their considerations were eclectic and closely tied to the topic of the day's lecture.

The teaching of reading was viewed, in part, as involving a belief as to sensitivity on the part of the teacher:

> I think it's a good idea not to force children to read a paragraph in a book aloud in class. The teacher should read and if a child would like to volunteer to read, great! I would reinforce it alot, but not force it.
> (4-LAJ- 3-1-Sept. 16/94)

Motivation of students and matching students to appropriately challenging materials were seen as central aspects of teaching children to read. Harrison, whose memories of learning to read centred upon both his difficulties with, and disinterest in, the content and materials, used his prior experiences to establish his intents in teaching reading:

> To teach a student to read, you must give them a desire to. Thus, finding what they are interested in and what it is they would like to read is the first step. Making sure that the selected material is not beyond their comprehension is the second step. It excites me to think about exciting students to read.
> (2-LAJ-1-3-Sept. 9/94)

Understanding the terminology associated with the teaching of reading and writing, the terms that have become commonplace among practicing teachers, served to demystify labels often heard in prior situations, but not fully understood:

> I finally have some solid information on whole language. What a relief! It's an attitude you take into the classroom about how reading and writing unfold.
> (4-LAJ-14-2-Oct. 18/94)

Clarification of the term "whole language" helped Harrison to more confidently project theoretical learning into his practicum classroom teaching, providing a framework for his language arts planning and instruction:

> I feel very excited about my practicum after today. The whole "whole language" concept really helps to put clear the approach a good teacher should have.
> (2-LAJ-10-1-Oct. 18/94)

The term phonics also falls into the category of language arts terms commonplace in the school setting, heard frequently by education students, yet, with limited prior knowing, cloaked in a mystique of theory and practice. Understanding the role of phonics in learning to read prompted more questions for Dawn:

> Phonics My immediate response to this class was excitement, yet a sense of panic at the same time. It's overwhelming. I'm always thinking there is so much to cover--when do I teach this or that, how and what order. I suppose I will sort this out someday--soon I hope!
> (4-LAJ-2-1-Sept. 13/94)

It served also to focus Marie's intended practice:

> As a teacher I would try to incorporate phonics into the language arts program I have, using teaching it in context and taking advantage of "teachable moments." I would use some worksheet/practice type activities for reinforcing concepts.
> (3-LAJ-4-4-Sept. 20/94)

Similarly, exploring the concept of vocabulary development firmed Karen's pre-existing belief in the inexorable relationship between words, meanings and wide reading:

> I believe that developing children's vocabulary is crucial, and that perhaps the best way to do this is through lots of varied reading.
> (1-LAJ-30-2-Feb. 1/95)

Stormi's anticipation of keeping abreast of the informal language of her students shaped her intended practice and revealed a quality she believed a successful teacher should possess--a sense of 'with-it-ness':

> Colloquialisms, however, run rampant through a grade six class. If a teacher does not keep up with the latest trends, these expressions may pass her by! I think it should be part of her job to keep up with the times in an attempt to understand her whole student.
> (6-LAJ-24/25-5-Feb. 14/95)

Affect and attentiveness were additional considerations that the participants' viewed as compatible with their prior knowing as critical components of their intended reading instruction:

> Children need to find out how exciting and enjoyable reading can be. If we can foster this attitude, we will have far less problems with literacy in this country.
> (2-LAJ-1/2-5-Sept. 9/94)

> I think I would ask questions about the story to ensure the children coloring are also taking the story in. If they seem to be lost, I would no longer allow them to color. Do whatever works!
> (4-LAJ-11-1-Oct. 11/94)

IV. Finding congruity

Congruencies between the language arts methodology content and the observation of actual classroom practice reinforced, and confirmed, the reciprocity of prior knowing and current learning for Marie:

> My sponsor teacher is doing an author study right now. Her theme is friendship and so is the series of books. She is presenting the literature as supplementary reading for those who are reading at a higher level. The books are to be read during silent reading. She also did a study on Canadian authors. Some of the ideas we discussed in class, she also did.
> (3-LAJ-28-1-Feb. 17/95)

Dawn's journal entry illustrated the recursive process of her considerations. In this instance, previously observed classroom practice helped her make meaningful connections with current methodology learning:

> This was a very informative class. I wish I had looked at my textbook--it would have made more sense (what my sponsor teacher was doing). Watching her do writer's workshop and learning about it now brings everything together. Now I get it. We have so much to learn.
> (4-LAJ-22-1-Jan. 6/95)

V. Finding incongruity

Discrepancies between current learning and observed classroom practices were a source of consternation to the participants. Stormi was dismayed that her prior knowing of whole language remained theoretical, based solely on language arts methodology lectures. Opportunities for her to apply her prior knowing in a classroom context were seen as being thwarted:

> Whole language sounds like a great concept although I have not seen it in use myself. In fact my grade 4 class does everything separately--even the novel study, spelling, handwriting and silent reading have no connections. I would love to get into a classroom using whole language next practicum. We have all seen proof that allowing children to have some choice and to take over a portion of the ownership for their own learning instills some pride and self-confidence in them. There does not seem to be that enthusiasm bubbling over in my students as they switch entirely from one subject to another. Life is not a series of totally isolated incidences and neither should their subjects be totally separate from one another. It seems as though they switch off the math button, go blank, and then switch on a spelling button. No enthusiasm spills over into the next subject--but it should!
> (5-LAJ-10/11-4-Oct. 17/94)

Michelle pointed out a perceived shortcoming in her prior knowing, based on her past classroom experiences. Although she had already spent a total of seven weeks of student teaching in two different classrooms, she wrote:

> I have never seen the writer's workshop technique used in a classroom. The concept sounds wonderful, but I need to see it in operation to judge its acceptance by students and its value.
> (6-LAJ-16-3-Jan. 6/95)

Karen reflected on her need to gulf the apparent differences in her prior knowing and current learning, and her sponsor teacher's approach:

> This was a very timely lesson as I am struggling somewhat with my unit planning--regarding my sponsor teacher's "style" and my own. He teaches grammar frequently but completely out of context (at least as far as I have seen on my Monday visits!) This lesson provided me with much "food for thought" on how I can fulfill his requirements yet address my own personal teaching style.
> (1-LAJ-36-1-March 8/95)

Considering Practicum: The Reality

The final professional year practicum, seven weeks in duration, was viewed by each participant as the pivotal experience in realizing the personal goal of becoming a teacher. When our anticipation of a given situation matches, to some degree, the actual reality of the situation, there is a seamless quality attributed to our actions. Our prior knowing is deemed sufficient to attend to the tasks at hand.

Minor readjustments in our thinking and doing allow us to put our intentions into operation with a seeming effortlessness. We are said to 'know what we're doing'. Much of the participants' observed classroom teaching was characterized by their sincere efforts and growing competency in this regard. Their prior knowing, of their pupils and their teaching of their pupils, combined with new learning 'on the job' and held the promise of teachers-to-be with much to offer their future pupils and schools.

The participants' prior knowing, however, met with dissonance in several practicum situations. All of the participants experienced incidents in which their prior knowing, beliefs, expectations and assumptions were the source of perceived insufficiency to themselves and to others. Their student teaching logs and our post-teaching discussions provided the medium for our mutual consideration of instances where prior knowing proved inadequate, given the demands of classroom teaching. It was these situations that served to illuminate why and how the participants discerned that their prior knowing was inadequate and needed to be readjusted and refined to meet the demands of new learning.

As the participants' experienced the reality of practicum teaching, their considerations focussed on four aspects of prior knowing brought with them to the classroom: being prepared; realizing the demands; managing a class; and becoming flexible.

I. Being prepared

Harrison's prior knowing, in this case his expectations for his pupils' sustained engagement with an assignment, left him feeling helpless as he scrambled to fill the extra time:

> I didn't plan enough! I was expecting the students to take much longer on the assignments I prepared and was left with a great amount of time on my hands. I didn't have any planned material and was made to think very quickly on my feet. I managed but was drained at the end of the day. I will plan extra for next time.
> (2-STL-2-1-March 27/95)

Michelle's log entry attests to her prior knowing as to the time and effort required, and expected of her, as a student teacher. She confided:

> O.K. so I took off too much time over the weekend! I felt behind all day long. K. [sponsor teacher] never said anything but I just didn't feel right on top today. Nothing to really pin point but it was just a feeling. Oh well, move on.
> (6-STL-3-1-April 3/95)

Later in the same week, she again addressed her lack of preparedness:

> I wasn't as prepared for P.E. as I thought I was. I found myself frustrated because I hadn't thought the lesson through to the end. The game section was where I sluffed off. I don't like that feeling.
> (6-STJ-4-4-April 7/95)

II. Realizing the demands

Often, and despite our best attempts at anticipation, it is unlikely that the demands of a situation are fully realized until the experience is underway. The participants found full-time teaching demanding and tiring, a reality for which their prior knowing left them unprepared. Karen, in particular, often worked in her classroom until late in the evening:

> I find it hard to believe that I can work this hard and this long and still not be ahead, or even caught up for that matter! It is now 11:47 p.m. I worked at the school until 10:50. This is not a whine...it is simply amazement.
> (1-STL-6-1-April 10/95)

The following evening she wrote:

> Even though I'm completely exhausted right now, I really look forward to tomorrow. I'm bound and determined to end a science or socials lesson feeling like I've been successful.
> (1-STL-7-7-April 11/95)

Harrison simply recorded:

> I am very tired today.
> (2-STL-6-2-April 7/95)

Michelle was overwhelmed by her considerations of the scope of a classroom teacher's responsibilities, in this case comprehensive assessment:

> Where do you find the time for anecdotal reporting? I seem to be "on" more than off and am finding it difficult to manage.
> (6-STL-8-4-April 27/95)

Assessment was an aspect of teaching unanticipated, but realized, by Harrison in the first week of his practicum:

> I need to start assigning recordable value to assignments.
> (2-STL-23-2-March 29/95)

III. Managing a class

Assuming the responsibility of full-time teaching in their classrooms resulted in the participants' reflecting on aspects of classroom life that centred on their immediate concerns. Classroom management was presented as a most immediate consideration by all participants. Their student teaching log reflections pointed to a gulf between their prior knowing, an assumption that thoroughly prepared units of study would find immediate acceptance with their pupils, and the reality that pupil engagement was not a given.

The participants all recounted concerns with their classroom management, in some instances spanning the seven week duration of the final practicum. While some of the participants were able to zero in on the problematic aspects of their management by considering specific individuals within the classroom, others made reference to the whole class as being the source of difficulty. Expectations for pupil behaviors were based on prior beliefs as to how the pupils would and should respond to a lesson. Three student teaching log entries illustrate Harrison's feelings of discouragement and frustration when the pupils disregarded his authority as the teacher. His anticipation of the role of teacher, based on his prior knowing, did not measure up to the reality he encountered:

> What a day. It was hard. I am still not satisfied with behavior. I like more "instant" order. I am not comfortable with the correcting of behavior when I ask for attention. I need to plan for more control and more activity by the students.
> (2-STL-7-1-March 11/95)

> Students worked well all morning, They started having troubles after recess. When it came time for the story students were being persistently rude. I had to stop. What an awful way to end the week. I wish it had been otherwise.
> (2-STL-11-1-April 21/95)

> The students were very active today. I just felt I had to hold them back all day. I don't think they take me seriously enough. I need to show them I mean business. They need to be much more controlled.
> (2-STL-12-1-April 24/95)

As class management became the major teaching concern, a post-teaching discussion centred on the need for Harrison to provide for much more structure in his teaching day. His previous anticipation was augmented by new learning when his prior knowing was deemed inadequate. Harrison's reflection on this discussion exemplified the manner in which he intended to incorporate new learning into his prior belief. Student-centred activities would not be abandoned, but reconfigured, as a privilege rather than as a given:

> Directed teaching. I need to control them more. They can't handle freedom. I will structure lessons much more in a teacher directed manner and let them earn free activities that are student directed.
> (2-STL-12-3-April 25/95)

The following day's reflection attested to the impact of his new learning:

> It was like night and day. These students work well under teacher direction. What a difference teacher directed activity has made.
> (2-STL-12-4-April 26/95)

Stormi faced ongoing challenges in classroom management. Despite relying on a specific aspect of her prior knowing, a rearranging of the seating plan did not have the desired results and she made ongoing references to "six too many boys."

> The only thing different was the new seating plan. Everyone was totally excited, and way too loud naturally. My goal was to eliminate some of the buddy-buddy chatter, but after half a day I do not think there is any change. The problem really is--about 6 too many boys in the class, and that is not fixable. They are all sweeties, though. None of them are bad, a fact for which I am very thankful.
> (5-STL-9-1-April 24/95)

> Morning classes sped along quickly and quietly. Unfortunately after lunch the students were wound up and my grade six class turned into my worst nightmare. About

> six of the boys decided to have their own good time once L. set the pace, and the class was ruined for everyone. Actually I wish this class has six fewer boys to begin with. Eighteen boys and twelve girls is not an ideal division. I wish I could replay the whole afternoon, and I would react differently to the situations arising.
> (5-STL-10-1-April 26/95)

Even after localizing a situation as the responsibility of two individual students, Stormi made reference to having to monitor the behavior of each student. Her scrutiny of each student attested to a preciously held belief, perhaps grounded in her own apprenticeship of observation as a school pupil:

> Cloak room fighting on the way to recess erupted between L. and B., so I will now be standing right at the door as each student comes in. Just like the Primary grades!
> (5-STL-10-3-April 28/95)

The prospect of having a physical education class observed appeared to make Stormi more repetitive in her behavioral demands of the students. Prior knowing as to probable disruptive behaviors by some of her pupils resulted in her directives to the class being escalated as they prepared to leave for the gym:

> "When there is silence in the room..."; "Show me you're ready to go to the gym...": "You'd better show me proper gym behavior on the way..." and continued once the class was in the gym: "We'll go back to the room..."; "The longer you take..." and culminated in cancellation of the class: "Balls back, we'll be going back to the room."
> (FN-5-April 26/95)

Although Stormi's prior knowing alerted her to probable management difficulties, it did not include a repertoire of effective strategies for spontaneous access. Inadequate prior knowing was supplemented by new learning 'on the job' as she was coached by her university supervisor and her sponsor teacher in post-teaching discussions.

Karen adopted a positive attitude towards classroom management and in the early stages of her practicum identified those individual students who presented as management challenges. Her prior knowing, in terms of behavioral challenges by students, reflected a perspective of seeing her pupils not as a group but rather as individuals:

> I was quite impressed at how well most [students] are accepting my presence in the class. I will continue to have trouble with F., H., K. and (especially) B., but they're providing me with great practice.
> (1-STL-3-8-March 31/95)

Similarly, Marie limited her comments on management to the students directly involved, rather than to the class in general:

> M. is also testing me. She does things to irritate me or to try to get my attention. Firmness is what a few students need right now.
> (3-STL-5-3-April 10/95)

Marie's growing self-reliance, in trusting herself and her prior knowing and acknowledging the changing contexts of classroom management, was illustrated in her writing:

> Discipline is not cut and dry. Sometimes I'm not sure what to do in a particular situation so I do what I think is best. (3-7-4-April 13/95).

Those participants who adopted a generic "whole class" approach to classroom management experienced a more prolonged difficulty with behavior problems than those participants who were able to identify and consider individual students who were disruptive. The examples of classroom management cited reflected the scope of management options that were familiar to the participants, ingrained in their prior knowing. Ease of classroom management was additionally evidenced by the participants who differentiated teaching situations in terms of their behavioral expectations for the students. Michelle, for example, reflected on the need to take the specific teaching context into account:

> I have to take a closer look at how quiet I need the students to be when I'm teaching. I don't want to be demanding silence when its not necessary.
> (6-STL-3-3-April 3/95)

and

> The kids started to cheer like it was a competition or something. They really got into it. I have been conscious of how many times I say shhh. I want to make sure what I say is effective & I'm not wasting both my breath & my time.
> (6-STL-6-3-April 19/95)

Dawn commented on her potential differing tolerance for noise in the classroom in light of supervisory expectations. Her prior knowing reflected a perspective that noise level varied according to the activity. She expressed doubts as to this knowing, though, when it would be scrutinized by others:

> One thing that has concerned me for a long time is noise level in the classroom. If it's purposeful noise (learning is happening) then there's nothing wrong with it. I always wonder, however, if sponsor teachers and/or supervisors really consider this if their preference is a really quiet class. (4-LAJ-16-4-Oct. 18/94)

IV. Becoming flexible

Some of the participants' schools appeared to be particularly busy with various extra-curricular activities included in the teaching day such as a community clean-up, a school wide speech contest, a career fair, a science fair, spring concert choir practices, cross-country runs, education ministry visits, and a bike safety assembly. The participants shared many instances of having their teaching plans disrupted by unforeseen and last minute changes. Prior knowing embodied expectations of an uninterrupted school day and the reality of disrupted teaching schedules was reported with a tone of dismay and disappointment.

A school-wide science fair had students leaving and returning to her classroom all day and Stormi was caught up in the demands of accommodating her teaching of planned lessons to the students' varying absences in order to attend to their exhibits.

> The semi-organized science fair kept the day in continual adjustment and readjustment. Some lessons were covered well, while others such as math and social studies were

> hurried so that 18 students could get back to their science projects.
> (5-STL-4-1-April 6/95)

Karen's teaching plans were continually altered at the last moment, and the reality of having to accommodate the modified teaching schedules did not always concur with her prior knowing, her expectations that the focus of student teaching would be her teaching of the students. A cross section of her student teaching log entries chronicled a litany of disruptions unparalleled by the experiences of any of the other participants:

> The afternoon had a surprise choir practice thrown in, which kind of changed my game plan a little but for the most part everything ran smoothly.
> (1-STL-4-1-April 5/95)

> Due to yet another last minute schedule change I had to scrap a lesson and find a filler for 15 minutes or so.
> (1-STL-5-5-April 7/95)

> The day was pretty disjointed. Choir practice in the morning. I went with the cross-country team after lunch, and then we went to [the] mall with the choir for education week.
> (1-STL-4-4-April 3/95)

> And did I mention the visit from the [Education Ministry] people?? I felt like I was on broadway today, performing for a cast of thousands. People were wandering in and out of my room constantly. . . Sometimes sitting down to watch, other times chatting with the students (they always pick E. for some reason--I'm dying to know what he tells them!).
> (1-STL-6-4-April 10/95)

Michelle also commented on her perception of valuable teaching time lost:

> The afternoon is a wash; bike safety or something.
> (6-STL-19-1-May 11/95)

As well, the participants shared incidents where last minute changes were imposed by teaching staff. Stormi's teaching plans were altered at the last minute by a directive from her sponsor teacher. This left her feeling unprepared and having to teach spontaneously, despite preparations based on her prior knowing and expectations as to how her teaching day should unfold:

> Today was a long day. When I am thrown off my original plan just five minutes before class, I get a bit flustered having to teach an idea that I have not had time to think through. By reading time I was on track again, but the mood for the day had been somewhat altered.
> (5-STL-3-1-April 4/95)

> The day was fairly zoolike scheduling-wise...the librarian went a half hour overtime with her project--then it was time for their spelling testthen choir in the gym. Very little time to teach. . .
> (5-STL-3-4-March 31/95)

Summary of Theme Number Three

Considering Practicum: Anticipation and Reality Grounded in Prior Knowing and New Learning

As the participants engaged in their education program course work, they were simultaneously engrossed with anticipating their student teaching experiences. The data sources used for this study revealed two distinct, yet overlapping, stances adopted by the participants during the professional year: the anticipation of practicum teaching and the reality of practicum teaching. The anticipation of practicum embodied a projected application of prior knowing to date. Their anticipations were characterized by an idealistic optimism and the participants' shared belief that thorough planning was key to a successful student teaching experience. The reality of practicum teaching was made evident through instances in which prior knowing was found to be insufficient to meet the demands of classroom teaching. In these cases, new learning was the source for expanding existing prior knowing and brought to subsequent teaching situations.

Prior knowing embodied the participants' anticipations, expectations and preparations for classroom teaching. In the anticipation of, and preparations for, their final student teaching experience, the participants accessed prior knowing based upon their first professional year practicum. This prior knowing, additionally augmented by weekly observational visits to their assigned final classrooms, helped them to anticipate the intricacies of a new classroom. Language arts journal entries were indicative of a process of considering new learning in the professional year contexts of past and present classroom placements. A process of comparing and contrasting the two classrooms was also evident as prior knowing was brought to transact within a new context.

The process of anticipation of practicum provoked the participants to assess current learning on the basis of its projected fit with practicum preparation. A practicum driven orientation became more evident as the practicum drew nearer in time. Based on their prior knowing, the participants' perceptions of what was needed to ready themselves in preparation for classroom teaching led them to gauge the pertinence of language arts methodology lectures with respect to their forthcoming utility.

Throughout the academic year, the participants' reflections on the teaching of language arts were indicative of a process of 'filling in' missing information, accommodating current learning to supplement existing and incomplete prior knowing. Their considerations were eclectic, indicative of the differing perspectives and varying prior knowing brought to the professional year. A tone of relief was evident in the participants' journal entries when the language arts lectures focussed on understanding the terminology specific to the language arts. Whole language and phonics were cited as terms often heard but fraught with incomplete knowing. Beliefs held as to their own previous learning and anticipated teaching of the language arts were often found to be grounded in the participants' past experiences, pre-dating their professional year experiences.

Weekly observational visits to their forthcoming practicum classrooms provided the participants with another lens through which to integrate their prior knowing and anticipate what they still needed to know in order to assume the role of student teacher. The participants were perceptive to instances where existing knowing and current leaning were judged to be either incongruent or congruent with observed classroom practices and the ensuing effect this would have on their planning.

The reality of student teaching was disconcerting for the participants when their prior knowing was perceived, by themselves or others, to be insufficient to deal with the demands of particular classroom teaching situations. The participants were thoughtful and candid in their considerations in this regard and offered insight into the ongoing transaction between prior knowing and current learning.

Being prepared for teaching involved the anticipation of lesson pacing and the participants recorded incidents where there was not enough lesson for the time allocated. Michelle shared an insight into a week in which she knew she had not been thorough enough in her teaching preparations.

The physical demands of full time teaching were not considered in the anticipatory phase of student teaching preparations. The participants' after-teaching hours were consumed by planning, marking, and a myriad of preparations to ensure that the following teaching day unfolded according to plan. Feelings of exhaustion were commonplace throughout the seven weeks. The reality of the exigent day-to-day effort and energy required of a novice teacher was not accounted for in the prior knowing of the participants.

Classroom management was presented in the participants' considerations as the aspect of student teaching that most clearly delineated the gulf between the anticipation of classroom teaching and the reality of classroom teaching. The participants' prior knowing focussed their anticipation of practicum teaching on comprehensive planning for teaching but did not take into account the possibility of their pupils' reluctance or refusal to engage in learning. As Stormi and Harrison grappled with incomplete prior knowing, a lack of strategies to call upon in situations where their classroom management was inadequate, rapid new learning was integrated with their existing constructs. Sponsor teachers, the practicum supervisor and the participants in effect pooled their prior knowing in order to address the disconcerting effects of disengaged pupils. Participants who exhibited more ease with classroom management were found to share a common management perspective, grounded in their prior knowing. They focussed on individual pupils and ways to engage them rather than viewing the whole class as a noncompliant entity.

The participants, as student teachers, were also faced with the gulf between anticipation and reality in instances where they were required to spontaneously readjust their teaching plans. This demand for flexibility on their part, both to accommodate extracurricular activities and last minute teaching requests by sponsor teachers, proved to be unsettling. The reactions of the participants revealed an aspect of their prior knowing brought to the classroom. They believed that student teaching would be comprised of uninterrupted teaching and learning interactions between teacher and pupils. Some of the participants' student teaching assignments were subject to a constant need for flexibility, while other participants experienced a seemingly interruption free practicum.

Theme Number Four:
Considering Significant Others: Accessing the Prior Knowing of Others

> The self is the definition people create (through interacting with others) of who they are. . . . In short, people come to see themselves in part as others see them. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 37)

Significant others were frequently mentioned as having an influence on new learning during the professional year, in essence a phenomenon of the participants' prior knowing interacting with the prior knowing of others. Peers, sponsor teachers, the language arts methodology professor, practicum supervisor, school staff members, and the parents of students were all viewed as having an impact on the construction of new learning. As well, an unsettling aspect of interacting with significant others in the school setting pointed to a pertinent perspective shared by some of the participants: being considered by others. A graphic representation of theme four is presented in Figure 5-5, on page 152.

I. Peers

The participants made frequent mention of social learning interactions and peer influences in the context of their process of constructing meaning in the language arts methodology class. In contrast, the participants made no reference to their peers in their student teaching logs. Factors which undermined peer interactions, once on practicum, were the frequent practice of placing only one

Figure 5-5

THEME FOUR

CONSIDERING SIGNIFICANT OTHERS:

Accessing the Prior Knowing Of Others

I. peers
II. sponsor teacher
III. professor
IV. practicum supervisor
V. school staff
VI. parents of pupils
VII. being considered by others

Figure 5-5: Representation of theme number four.

student teacher in a school, a lack of opportunity to observe or teach in any but their assigned classroom, and the all-consuming one hundred per cent teaching load assigned for weeks three through six of the final practicum.

A number of education students entering the professional year were reassigned to a new cohort group, a faculty move to slightly reconfigure the student composition of the two sections. Stormi commented on her initial reservation, and almost immediate relief, in her first journal entry. Her quick assessment that "they are just like me" indicated that her prior knowing, what she brought with her to the course, seemed in line with that of her new peers:

> My immediate reaction to this class--phew, now that I have finally been introduced to twenty "new" students from Group 1, I can see that they are just like me. I can relax and settle down to work.
> (5-LAJ-1-1-Sept. 9/94)

Marie commented on her changing prior knowing, a growing positive perception of peer interactions, from competitive to collegial:

> I did not like the "peer teaching" aspect because it is not a real situation and because it always ends up being competitive. I felt support from my colleagues and I can see how much we have grown--relaxed.
> (3-LAJ-8-5-Oct. 4/94)

She later reneged on this view in a journal entry three weeks later:

> It's difficult not to feel stressed at this time, especially when it comes to overhearing others in my class and comparing what they are doing with what I am doing. I know it'll come together!
> (3-LAJ-15-3-Oct. 28/94)

Comparing herself to others can be viewed as comparing her prior knowing to her perceptions of the prior knowing of others. Not knowing 'enough' prompted feelings of insecurity.

Open admiration for their peers' abilities was forthcoming from all of the participants, based on a process writing project which culminated in volunteer authors reading their own works in an author's chair setting. Those students who read their writing aloud in effect exposed their prior knowing to audience scrutiny by their peers. Two class times were set aside for this celebration, referred to as Tea House Readings. Dawn made reference to her new learning as supplementing her existing knowing:

> "Author's Chair." Wow. A lot of talented people are in our class. I've seen a lot of great ideas I'd like to try, and have my students try.
> (4-LAJ-27-4-Jan. 27/95)

Marie focussed on the uniqueness of her peers' experiential knowing:

> It was a pleasure to be able to sit back and listen to my colleagues read their stories. As they read, their story was enhanced by the "author's touch." Each story was so different and interesting in its own way.
> (3-LAJ-25-1-Jan. 31/95)

The authors' celebration, in fact, was identified by the participants as a celebration of the individuality of each writer's prior knowing:

> The response to the "Readings" was very telling I thought. Many of us (ME!) were very shy and intimidated by the prospect of sharing our writing. After hearing the first couple of stories and having an opportunity to realize that each story was quite unique, I was no longer paranoid about the prospect of reading mine. The class was so accepting and appreciative of each person's contribution. The tone of the class encouraged and invited participation--an atmosphere we would want to duplicate in our own classroom.
> (1-LAJ-29-1-Jan. 27/95)

The individuality of each classmate's interpretation of the writing project was grounded in their own prior knowing:

> It was a great experience to be able to be a part of the Tea House readings. I didn't realize how talented my colleagues were until I heard some of the stories. Some things I really appreciated were the sense of humor, the integration of historical facts into the writing, the personal effect in authors reading their own work, the variety of style and the relation to their [social studies] models (ie. how the story was initiated).
> (3-LAJ-24-1-Jan. 27/95)

> I was amazed at the different ideas that were generated by my classmates.
> (1-LAJ-28-1-Jan.25/95)

The sharing of prior knowing among peers was viewed as a valuable entity:

> I benefitted from the ideas that people shared regarding publishing their writing.
> (3-LAJ-22-1-Jan. 24/95)

Dawn's scrutiny of her peers' presentations to the language arts class helped her define her expectations of herself as a teacher, in this instance prompted by a perceived lacking in her peers' prior knowing:

> One of the things that really stands out for me from this class is how important it is to spell accurately and print neatly (or write) when doing presentations and teaching. It makes you lose confidence when you see spelling errors on the board or parts of speech mixed up. Of course, people are not perfect but teachers are expected to be, so we must be very conscious of these things.
> (4-LAJ-6-3- Sept. 27/94)

Similarly, Dawn's prior knowing, a belief as to the importance of acknowledging the input of all students in the class, was reinforced by her peers' disregard for this, during a group presentation:

> Also, by just observing the presentations, I realized that it's important to write down all children's examples they give you during brainstorming. They all should feel important and that they're contributing to the lesson.
> (4-LAJ-6/7-3-Sept. 27/94)

II. Sponsor teacher(s)

The ongoing and pervasive influence of five of the participants' sponsor teachers during their professional year attests to the significance of these relationships which were given frequent mention in both the language arts journals and student teaching logs. Knowles and Cole (1996), though, refer to the general agreement, both in the literature and actual practice, that "the role of the cooperating [sponsor] teacher is poorly defined and that expectations related to the role are ambiguous, diverse, and often overlapping or at odds" (p. 659). Their charge would seem to hold relevance for the findings of this study, in that Harrison made no reference to any interactions with a sponsor teacher in any context of the professional year examined.

Sponsor teachers were seen by the participants as positive role models whose expertise, experience and encouragement were valued. The prior knowing of the sponsor teachers was viewed as an effortless expertise in practice, as indicated by Marie in a language arts journal entry:

> It is also interesting how experienced teachers can breeze through a piece of writing that a child in the semi-phonetic stage has written while I struggle.
> (3-LAJ-6-4-Sept. 27/94)

Dawn, in this student teaching log entry, disclosed her own tacit understanding of the apprenticeship of observation:

> I'm watching and learning a lot from B.[sponsor teacher}. She really gets them involved which is what I want to do.
> (4-STL-1-5-April 4/95)

Stormi expressed confidence in anticipating that her sponsor teacher would provide mentorship to her, as a novice teacher:

> L. is great. She has already offered encouragement, time and tips over and over again. I am confident that she will be there to help me through my problem areas.
> (5-STL-1-3-March 27/95)

Sponsor teachers represented the voice of experience, and were viewed as knowing more:

> I would probably not allow kids to color or doodle while listening to the story, but my sponsor teacher challenged my thinking. She said some children need to doodle while a story is being read and some prefer to just listen. She said you must be flexible and accommodate different learning styles. I would have thought they weren't paying attention to the story if they're doing something else.
> (4-LAJ-10-2-Oct. 11/94)

That Stormi deferred to her sponsor teacher's 'knowing more' was clearly evident in the two situations cited below:

> My sponsor teacher schedules a one-half hour spelling class every day. At first I thought this was too much, but now I wonder if I was wrong? And, the lessons do develop other skills as well.
> (5-LAJ-10-3-Oct. 14/94)

During the last week of her final practicum, Stormi was able to observe her sponsor teacher as she resumed classroom teaching. This experience represented an opportunity for Stormi to continue to augment her prior knowing, right to the very end:

> My days are seeming so short now with B. [sponsor teacher] back in the class, but I am thankful for that because I learn so much from watching her with the class. I enjoy all of the learning experiences I can garner from others because that benefit will be ending all too soon. Experience does seem to make a great difference.
> (5-STL-12-1-May 7/95)

The every day actions of the sponsor teacher were seen as supplementing the participants' prior knowing. They believed that this knowing would be accessible when they were presented with similar situations in the future:

> There was a new student today. B. [sponsor teacher] assigned him a buddy to show him around the school, etc. Good idea.
> (4-ST16-4-April 27/95)

Sponsor teachers were seen as being accessible and supportive in their mentorship when addressing specific and immediate teaching concerns. Both Karen and Michelle related their concerns about their feelings of inadequate prior knowing in their expectations for pupil understanding of math concepts taught. Their sponsor teachers' shared their own prior knowing and were seen as a source of reassuring experience:

> I wasn't overly impressed with my math lesson C. (who teaches math for D. [sponsor teacher]) says I'm too uptight about it, and not to expect everyone or even most of them to "get it" the first time through. I don't think I was expecting them to "get it", I just feel I didn't explain it very well. Most of them understand the basic concept--that you multiply to get the area--but trying to explain why you call it a "centimetre squared' was not fun. Maybe a little more preparation on the "understanding end of it" next time will help. Or maybe I should do like C. says and "lighten up"????
> (1-STL-9-1-April 18/95)

> I had troubles with Math. I thought that every student should understand the first run through. So it bothered me when one girl didn't understand. I wasn't frustrated or anything; I just kept trying to think of other ways to explain it to her. K. [sponsor teacher] says that it takes 3 or 4 times for some kids so I'll just keep my eye on her.
> (6-STL-3-2-April 4/95)

Michelle also made reference to her sponsor teacher's sharing his prior knowing and how it proved to be accurate in real practice:

> K.[sponsor teacher] told me once not to show a schedule in class because if you sway from that schedule even slightly it will have an effect on the kids. I witnessed one form of this effect today. It took them about 5 minutes to understand that we were going to the computer lab first and not having math. Good experience to keep in mind.
> (6-STL-16-2-May 9/95)

III. Language arts professor

The participants used their language arts journals to pose questions which had the capacity to supplement their prior knowing with new learning. Stormi queried:

> I see this method [whole language] as a fantastic advantage for the students. What are the disadvantages?
> (5-LAJ-11-3-Oct. 17/94)

Marie used her language arts journal to pose questions in order to supplement the knowing she felt would enhance her upcoming classroom teaching:

> Should children be allowed to color/draw etc. while being read to? Is it better to have them in their desks or on the floor/carpet?
> (3-LAJ-3-3-Sept. 16/94)

Many of the written comments to the professor centred around the required language arts journal. Karen, based upon her prior knowing, incorporated a feeling of empathy, and an opportunity to establish an interpersonal relationship in her entry:

> I really appreciate your responses, Nancy. It is nice to have your input and thoughts--I realize this must be very time consuming for you.
> (1-LAJ-19-2-Jan. 4/95)

Marie communicated a feeling of uneasiness with the process of journal writing. She attributed this reluctance to a perception, on her part, that her sharing of her prior knowing was self-limited because it would be subjected to a professorial audience:

> I find it difficult to write in a journal when I feel I do not have anything to say. I also feel that what I write tends to be influenced by the fact that it will be read.
> (3-LAJ-16-1-Nov. 1/94)

IV. Practicum supervisor

The role of the practicum supervisor, while portrayed by the participants' education faculty as a source of teaching support and on-site mentorship and advocacy, was ultimately viewed by them as one of judgement and definitive authority. The participants used their student teaching logs to reflect their prior knowing as to the acumen of the mid-practicum report, signed by both their sponsor teacher and practicum supervisor. Although signed by both, the participants viewed the report as reflecting the assessment of the university supervisor. Michelle's practicum report reinforced her prior knowing that her career choice was apt:

> Boy what a difference a good mid-term [practicum report] makes. I walked into class this morning knowing exactly where I stand. Great feeling. I have a different confidence today. Sort of "I'm a teacher." The morning hummed along and I didn't want to leave for lunch. Thanx for that boost.
> (6-STL-7-2-April 21/95)

Stormi expressed regrets about her mid-practicum report not matching her anticipated, and desired, teaching performance:

> I feel good about the math and science lessons, but I'm not feeling too good about my midterm [practicum report].
> (4-STL-11-3-April 20/95)

Harrison used his student teaching log to summarize the content of a particular post-teaching supervisory meeting. During this meeting, he had been told that his student-directed activities were not producing the desired student learning and the ensuing discussion had focussed upon ways in which he might initiate a more workable manner of classroom management. Harrison's new learning was built upon the base of prior knowing that had proven untenable and was in need of modification:

> Suggestions I was given today and liked:
> 1. The name card lottery: All hands down and select a respondent (keeps greater amount of attention)
> 2. Control behavior through work. Don't have too many unbalanced types of activities. (Student directed <--> teacher directed. Seat work <--> active work. Group <--> individual)
> 3. Bring down expectations and level of work to be achieved. Too high. I set it for grades much higher. I need to revamp this.
> 4. Clear, distinct lessons. Sequence intro, body and clear closure.
> 5. Marking: Mark as you go!!
> 6. Don't make marking insane. Plan it to be quick and reflective.
> 7. Only 1 new thing a day.
> (2-STJ-8/9-2-April 12/95)

Karen, in a student teaching log entry, alluded to reflective redundancy--the prior knowing as to when one is becoming repetitive in the sharing of reflective thoughts:

> This day was reflected upon at great length with Nancy after school! I'd rather leave it at that, as one can only reflect so much.
> 1-STL-3-2-March 30/95)

Once again, Karen's student teaching log entry was informative concerning her perception that her journal entries seemed redundant--that her prior knowing was being repeated over and over again:

> I sometimes find reflections very hard to do. I feel like a "broken record" saying the same thing over and over.
> (1-STL-11-1-April 20/95)

A similar conception was also voiced succinctly by Michelle:

> Not much to reflect on.
> (6-STL-16-1-May 9/95)

Marie's student teaching log entry spelled out her understanding of this required assignment, as her prior knowing transacted with her practicum experiences:

> It is encouraging to see how much I have grown in 2 weeks. Of course, I have much to learn (it will take a lifetime), but being a reflective practitioner is becoming habit for me.
> (3-STL-7-7-April 13/95)

Dawn's final student teaching log entry attested to the support she realized in the supervisor/student teacher relationship. Her comments revealed that while her prior expectations for a close sponsor teacher/student teacher relationship did not come to fruition, she found merit in other aspects of her practicum experience:

> Although this wasn't the practicum made in heaven, I can honestly say I truly enjoyed the children & that was what kept me going, as well as your support.
> (4-LAJ-May 11/95)

V. School staff

Sponsor teachers, while credited with fostering the ongoing learning of the participants, were not the only sources to influence meaning making. Interactions with other teachers on staff were seen to reassure, provide empathy, mold and reinforce the participants' evolving conceptions of teaching and of themselves as teachers. The participants' student teaching log entries appeared to give support to the novice-expert dichotomy, and they apparently accepted at face value the comments and beliefs, the prior knowing, of practicing teachers. Zeichner and Gore (1990) refer to the need to differentiate between campus-based and field-based aspects of teacher socialization "because they represent different and often competing notions of learning to teach" (p. 336).

The issue of classroom management, identified by the participants as a problematic aspect of student teaching, was discussed in their student teaching logs--as confirmed and reinforced by the views, the prior knowing, of other teachers in the school.

> Staff room teacher talk had warned me that students ruin P.E. for a teacher who loves it. This is seeming to become the case. The constant bickering and arguing over rules wears me down after awhile. They also remind me that whichever sport I choose, there will always be students complaining that they would rather be doing something else.
> (5-STL-4-2-April 5/95)
>
> No one seems to like teaching gymnastics on this staff and I can see why. I wouldn't mind teaching it, but it is difficult when the children have their own mind set about what they want to do.
> (1-STL-1-8-March 28/95)

Practicing teachers' views were accorded credibility and were seen to give a weightiness to the evolving beliefs of the participants, especially when these views related to the participants' concerns with the reality of teaching. Classroom management was one such example:

> It has occurred to me that in respect to classroom management, I am doing what teachers do in Sept. and Oct. Teachers have told me that not much learning takes place in those first 5 to 7 weeks. With this in mind I can lighten up myself.
> (6-STJ-8-2-April 26/95)
>
> One of the teachers in the school mentioned that they felt we sometimes do the children at this school a disservice by lowering our expectations of them. (eg. teaching to the lowest level rather than attempting to challenge them

> somewhat). The focus of the school is more on social behaviors than academic achievement--not that academic achievement isn't valued, but you can't teach academics if your social behaviors continue to "get in the way."
> (1-STL-8-3-April 12/95)

Harrison found his concerns with classroom management assuaged, when it was presented as a topic of importance by the teachers on staff:

> They [pupils] need to be under much greater control in out of classroom transition times. I am going to also work on the hand signals decided on in the primary meeting.
> 2-STL-6-4-April 7/95)

Karen altered her teaching plans to more closely align with what she observed the other teachers doing as the Easter holiday approached. Her student teaching log entry exemplified how she integrated her existing knowing and beliefs about the productive use of instructional time with new learning as to holiday anticipation, celebrated in the school setting.

> I wasn't sure how much to "get into" the holiday hype, but soon discovered I'd better do a little more than I had planned given the rest of the school's attitude and the attention span of the children. Several of the activities I chose has an Easter theme, but were "work-oriented", allowing me to get further information of their skills and abilities.
> (1-STL-8-2-April 13/95)

Opinions offered by non-teaching staff were accepted as fact, in this case given credibility due to a more lengthy exposure to the students in the classroom:

> Mrs. S. [special student's aide] says she thinks the kids are working very hard, which helps me to hear because she's been observing this class all year.
> (1-STL-11-7-April 20/95)

The role of a substitute teacher, when the sponsor teacher was absent, remained nebulous to both the participants affected and myself, as supervisor. Prior knowing was inadequate for all concerned. Does the substitute provide extra teaching help, fulfill a legal provision, provide written feedback? Their expected role was not made clear and as recorded by the participants, they took varying approaches to the substitute teacher's presence:

> This afternoon I had a substitute teacher who was to take orders from me! That felt good for a change.
> (5-STL-5-3-April 7/95)
>
> D.[sponsor teacher] was away today, so I was left to my own devices for the better part of the day. The strange part was having a sub (who graduated last year--E. N.) just hanging around watching me.
> (1-STL-2-1-March 29/95)
>
> D. was away today so there was a sub in the room for the majority of the afternoon. I'm quite used to having an audience in there with me, so it's not that big a deal. She was quite helpful with E. and C. too which was wonderful.
> (1-STL-10-6-April 19/95)

VI. Parents of pupils

Dawn, alone, made references to the parents of her future students in her language arts journal. Both entries illustrate her perception that, as a teacher, she will be viewed as an authority on the language arts queries of parents:

> This class made me realize that we as teachers must be aware of the commercial products on the market. Parents will be asking us about them and I want to be able to give them an intelligent answer.
> (4-LAJ-3-2-Sept. 16/94)

She anticipated that she will possess specialized knowledge:

> Parents aren't going to be familiar with names of stages of spelling development.
> (4-LAJ-8-2-Oct. 3/94)

During her final practicum, Stormi was the only participant to recount unpleasant encounters with parents of her students. Her first experience underscored the vulnerability of a student teacher, not knowing enough in the eyes of a parent. Stormi responded by distancing herself from the situation:

> There was a phone call for me after school from an upset parent. Her daughter came home crying, complaining that she hates the group she was sitting around, and that two of the boys were teasing her about her weight when she moved to another group for art. Luckily this was an easy situation to handle calmly and businesslike because it had nothing to do with me. I easily assured her that the problem would be dealt with and she hung up reassured.
> (5-STL-7-4-April 13/95)

Her response that "the situation had nothing to do with me" was indicative of limited prior knowing on her part. Stormi's knowing was discordant with van Manen's (1991) notion of *in loco parentis*, that the teacher be sensitive to the lived world of the student, which "defines their present understandings, mood, emotional state, and readiness to deal with the subject matter and the world of the school" (p.7).

The second incident left Stormi with a sense of uncertainty and vulnerability, that her firm intent in not letting one pupil disrupt the class had resulted in an upset parent's scrutiny of her teaching:

> You would never know that I had an upset mother in with me this morning! She was upset that perhaps there was a personality conflict between L. and myself. I assured her that I liked L., but would not put up with his constant disruptions any longer as they were affecting the whole class rather negatively. She left realizing I was not deliberately picking on L., but reminded me she would be keeping a close eye on the situation.
> (5-STL-9-3-April 21/95)

Marie, on the other hand, was seen by a parent as having an authoritative presence and sufficient prior knowing to respond to a parental concern:

> A parent came in today, asking if her daughter's behavior has changed in the last while. It has somewhat, but she hasn't reverted back to her old ways very often/nor on nearly as serious a scale.
> (3-STL-21-4-May 4/95)

A prior knowing and conviction that parents should be willing partners in their child's education was evident as both Michelle and Harrison sought to involve parents in their attempts to monitor homework and behavior concerns. Michelle attempted, but was unsuccessful, in trying to involve D.'s parents:

> D.'s scamming me! It's day 2 without his homework book coming back to me. I attempted to call his parents today but no answer.
> (6-STL-8-1-April 28/95)
>
> I am concerned about C. He can't seem to monitor his own behavior. I am calling his parents tonight and discussing this with them. I also need to carefully consider & remember that change cannot be instant. I need to patiently assess effectiveness.
> (2-STL-5-3-April 4/95)

VII. Being considered by others

The participants' prior knowing of practicum teaching shaped their unspoken expectations about their being acknowledged and accepted as novice teachers. Stormi and Karen wrote of incidents in which their role, and authority, as student teachers was perceived to be of lesser importance than the hierarchical, even patriarchal, (Belenky et al.,1986; Lewis & Simon, 1987) attitudes and agenda of their male sponsors and of others who taught their classes.

Stormi's teaching plans were put on hold with no forewarning by Mr. N. Zeichner and Gore (1990) allude to teacher socialization as, in part, a process in which men in administration "exercise power over women" (p. 332).

> The subject that I was a little apprehensive about teaching. Mr. N. [administrator teaching one subject area] had forgotten I was teaching and had one project he wanted finished off before I started a new unit.
> (5-STL-6-2-April 11/95)

Karen's implementation of her planned lessons was also delayed by her sponsor teacher's agenda, as he appropriated her time with the class:

> I taught a little more today, but haven't yet started teaching any of my lessons as D.[sponsor teacher/school administrator] is still in the process of finishing up units.
> (1-STJ-1-5-March 28/95)

Karen's access to her sponsor teacher was compromised, both by his absences from school and his administrative duties. Her log book entry expressed empathy for her sponsor teacher's duty-filled day, although there was no time given to either observing or discussing Karen's teaching:

> D. [sponsor teacher] did come back today, but it was a very hairy day administration-wise for him, having just returned and having the other V.P. away, etc.. . . I wasn't able to meet with D. today--he kept trying to get in but it was his first day back, he was somewhat overwhelmed with his [administrative] duties.
> (1-STL-3-9 March 31/95)

A continued lack of feedback by Karen's sponsor teacher and his relief teacher was underscored in our post-observation discussion:

> N: You're not getting very much [written] feedback from D. Are you getting feedback from C. [the relief teacher]?
> K: C. was watching me yesterday but I went to talk to her after school and she was sitting there writing through my whole math class but she was working over there and looked very serious so, um, she just left. She didn't say anything to me so I don't know if she wrote about that.
> (1-AT-May 3/95)

Although Karen wished to access the experiential background of her sponsor teachers, she was left very markedly to depend on her own prior knowing.

Prior knowing did not help Stormi anticipate the effect of the presence of a substitute teacher in the classroom. Undefined roles lessened her authority and caused her to question her role in the classroom:

> Today we has a substitute teacher whom the students had had for a week or two last year. This made the day harder for me because the students really liked her and kept asking if she could teach some of the lessons. Their attention was often divided and harder to keep, so I found the day long and drawn out. Until today I had really been feeling like I was the teacher!
> (5-STL-7-1-April 13/95)

Stormi's tentative and undefined role in the classroom continued and was illustrated by her log entry, toward the end of her final practicum:

> Actually during language arts S. [a pupil] assured me, "Don't worry. We're only treating you like we treat all subs!"
> (5-STJ-11-2-May 3/95)

Marie expressed a tentativeness in her authority in dealing with another teacher's students:

> The grade 7 buddies came in today to continue working on [a theme related project]. Since T. [sponsor teacher] began this project, the students have been getting together every Tuesday. I have noticed how some buddies work well together, while others do not. . . I'm not in a position to decide what should be done, but I think I would talk to the buddies about the purpose of buddy time, and what is expected of them.
> (3-STL-8-1-April 18/95)

Stormi, too, was tentative in terms of establishing her autonomy and authority in her practicum classroom. When queried by a student as to the assignment's criteria, Stormi responded:

> "That will be up to Mrs. S. [sponsor teacher]. Mrs. S. has asked for a title page."
> (FN-5-April 10/95)

Michelle was the only participant to record a situation in which she felt confident in autonomously promoting her own agenda. Her prior knowing reinforced her belief that her need to access school resources was just as important as any other staff member's:

> I have grabbed every spare minute of computer lab time; this includes other teachers' class time.
> (6-STL-15-3-May 8/95)

Summary of Theme Number Four

The participants made frequent reference to the individuals in their professional year experiences who were seen to be most instrumental in their ongoing processes of meaning making. Their perceptions of who was central to this process shifted as the focus of the professional year changed in context. Throughout the academic year, significant others were those in close proximity--their peers and methodology professor. As the final practicum drew nearer in time, and was actually in progress, the participants viewed those within the school setting as most significant to meaning-making--the sponsor teacher, practicum supervisor, other school staff members and the parents of pupils.

The participants made frequent positive references to their teacher education peers in their language arts journals. The sharing of prior knowing in the context of current language arts learning was valued for its potential as a confirmation of current learning, as a source of new ideas, as well as for the collegiality of the interactions which resulted. Group collaborations were perceived as supportive and non-threatening opportunities for shared learning by the participants. The participants viewed their peers as teachers-to-be and scrutinized their peer's presentations as to their positive, and negative, features. Feelings of competitiveness on the part of the participants were seen as a function of comparing one's prior knowing with that of others in the class, a perception that one's peers 'know more.' Peers were held, for the most part, in high regard. The language arts methodology activity which illustrated this most vividly was the writers' workshop and celebratory author's chair culmination. Admiration and support for their peer's knowing was evident on the part of each participant.

The collegial support, so clearly perceptible in the methodology course, was markedly absent once the final practicum was begun. The participants made no reference at all to their peers once student teaching was underway. The opportunity for continued sharing of their prior knowing and current learning was abruptly discontinued. Full-time teaching demands and the relative isolation of the participants--one or two student teachers assigned to the same school--were likely factors contributing to this phenomenon.

In my role as language arts professor, the participants considered me a significant other. The participants used their student teaching logs as a written dialogue with their methodology professor, and interpreted this assignment on the basis of their own individualized prior knowing, their expectations as to the education student/education professor relationship. This knowing manifested itself in their perceptions of the overlapping roles accorded the professor--as one who knows 'more'; as a judge of education student knowledge; and as a mentor and confidant.

The considerations of the six participants reflected widely varying relationships with their sponsor teachers. Marie and her sponsor teacher, and Michelle and her sponsor teacher, developed a compatibility and rapport that was characterized by mutual respect, supportive mentoring, and professional acknowledgement, a full regard for the prior knowing brought by each to the classroom. Marie's student teaching log entry, written in the latter portion of her practicum, attested to her transition, from student teacher to being regarded as a peer in the teaching profession:

> T. [sponsor teacher] and I did reflections together.
> (STL-20-1- May 5/95).

Sponsor teachers are described in the literature as "probably the greatest influence on the quality of a field experience" (Posner, 1989, p. 47) and "very influential" (Darling-Hammond and Cobb, 1996, p. 37) especially given the amount of time they spend with their student teachers. The considerations of the participants reflected sponsor teacher/student teacher relationships as one of mentorship, support and reassurance. Most insightful, though, were those considerations which illustrated variations in the levels of sponsor teacher assistance and aid. Karen, for example, despite her stated need for more feedback and support from her sponsor teacher, access to his prior knowing, found him to be of less influence due to the little time spent together. Harrison made no reference at all to any aspect of his interactions with his sponsor teachers over the course of the professional year. Dawn made reference to her practicum as "not made in heaven", alluding to her prior knowing that she held expectations for a greater degree of sponsor teacher support. At times, Dawn and Stormi both expressed lesser degrees of compatibility with their sponsor teachers. Despite the time potentially available for sponsor teacher and student teacher interactions, Knowles and Cole (1996) report that the perceived role of the sponsor teacher is "poorly defined and that expectations related to the role are ambiguous, diverse, often overlapping and at odds" (p. 659). The participants' experiences and considerations upheld this contention, notably Stormi, whose reflections were on occasion indicative of the 'sink or swim' perspective sometimes ascribed to the practicum experience. The sinking feeling, not knowing enough to meet the contextual demands of particular classroom realities, was exacerbated by feeling critically judged at times.

The practicum supervisor's role was considered by the participants to be one of significant other and to embody mentorship, advocacy and authoritative input into the content of the mid-term and final practicum reports. Prior knowing brought to practicum teaching by the participants centred on the perspective that the final report would be of prime importance as they applied for teaching positions. The student teaching logs were considered to reinforce the importance of reflecting upon one's teaching but were also viewed at times as being a tedious requirement which some participants reported made them feel repetitive.

Other school staff members were considered to be significant as the participants brought their prior knowing to the context of practicum teaching. These staff members were afforded a high measure of credence as they shared their beliefs and prior knowing with the participants. Often seen as a source of reassurance and experienced representatives of the school's culture, staff room conversations and other informal exchanges served as a means for novice teacher socialization. Although a presence in several participants' classrooms over the course of their student teaching, the role of substitute teachers remained unclear. Prior knowing, as to the nature of classroom teaching responsibilities with a substitute teacher in their classroom, remained nebulous to both the participants and practicum supervisor.

Dawn anticipated, during the language arts methodology course, that the parents of her future pupils would perceive her as knowing more and possessing expert knowledge. Marie found this to be the case when, during her final practicum, she was approached by a parent who sought teacher expertise in an assessment of her daughter's behavioral changes. The parent valued Marie's prior knowing. Interactions with parents of pupils prompted considerations by Stormi that her prior knowing as a student teacher was being critically judged. Harrison and Michelle, through the lens of their prior knowing, attempted to involve parents of specific pupils as partners in their child's education.

The perception of not being considered, not fully regarded as a peer in the teaching profession, by others in the school setting contributed to the self-questioning of the adequacy of the participants' prior knowing. On occasion, others who taught their classes were seen as having a more pressing teaching agenda and the participants recorded incidents where their teaching plans were deferred, sometimes at the last moment. A perception that their prior knowing and student teaching intentions were not as important as that of the full-time teachers was found to be particularly disquieting by both Stormi and Karen. Pupils in Stormi's class seemed vague as to her role and authority, questioning her prior knowing, and comparing it to that of their classroom teacher and, in an unsettling incident, a substitute teacher.

Although Bowman (1991) charges that

> "It is particularly important that all students who are preparing to be teachers be treated as if they are already teachers whether they are in schools or on campus. . . Many students in faculties of education have qualities not possessed by either teachers, administrators or professors with whom they are associated. Wise teachers in all institutions do not ignore or denigrate these resources, they harness them. (p. 50),

the participants' reflections more closely align with Kleinsasser's (1992) investigation of the experiences of eight intern [student] teachers. She found that her participants' reflections dealt more with their cultural roles within the school than their professional roles. Kleinsasser writes of their experiences:

> Their knowledge of role differentiation intensified the impact of verbal and nonverbal reminders of an intern teacher's transitional classroom role and lack of status: the superior base of experience a cooperating teacher has, the student barbs, and the artifacts of teaching (p. 61) which include . . . the grade book, teacher's desk, mailbox, daily announcement bulletin, parking space, building and room keys, content area specialties, and committee assignments (p. 60).

Theme Number Five

Considering the Future: Looking Forward

The fifth theme focused on the projected and post-education program experiences of the participants, as they participated in the final professional year practicum. As such, this theme represented their accumulated bodies of prior knowing and new learning as they moved along the continuum of teacher education, from methodology students to student teachers to certified teachers and considered the future. The participants' student teaching log entries chronicled incidents illustrative of their mental shifts, from viewing themselves as student teachers to seeing themselves as future practicing teachers. This transitional shift was most evident as their final practicum placements were underway and coming to a conclusion. As they contemplated their futures as teachers and assessed their own feelings of preparedness for embarking upon a teaching career, the participants' considerations centred on three aspects of their prospective anticipations, a culmination of their prior knowing grounded in their professional year experiences. These were feeling like a teacher, experiencing self-doubts, and expressing self-confidence in a teaching future. Figure 5-6 presents a graphic representation of theme number five.

Figure 5-6

THEME FIVE

CONSIDERING THE FUTURE: LOOKING FORWARD

I. feeling like a teacher
II. self-doubts
III. confidence in a teaching future

Figure 5-6: Representation of theme number five.

I. Feeling like a teacher

Prior knowing brought to the professional year transacted with current learning during the program and culminated in the participants' certification as teachers. The individuality of the interactions of past and present experiences formed a lens through which each participant came to assess his or her own perceptions of being ready to enter the teaching profession. As revealed in their student teaching logs, the participants shared incidents which illustrated their transitions from student teachers to future teachers. Based on their constructs of what it meant to be a teacher, the participants reflected on their own perceptions of what made them feel like teachers--their prior knowing of what it meant to regard themselves as a teacher--a process of self-monitoring as to when and why they felt like teachers in their practicum classrooms.

Stormi's student teacher log entry indicated that she found the role of teacher more realistic and easier to assume when left on her own to teach her students, without her sponsor teacher watching:

> Today I felt like a teacher in the classroom. B. [sponsor teacher] made a point of being out of the classroom quite often so that the students did not even notice her comings and goings. I felt much more confident and relaxed when I was not being watched and judged all the time.
> (5-STL-6-5-April 11/95)

Positive interactions with her pupils prompted Stormi to reflect on the personal benefits and fulfilling recompense of a teaching career:

> It was marvellous to receive all the Easter gifts from the students. I don't think students who brought things felt they had to, rather they were the ones who wanted to say thank you for being our teacher. The spur of the moment thankyous for extra time spent with a student over a math problem, or helping someone to understand the use of quotations--these are the moments that I love best. I really feel I have helped someone, and that this job is rewarding.
> (5-STL-7-2-April 13/95)

Marie grappled with the issue of pursuing the lesson as planned or taking her cues from a restless class. As she weighed both avenues, her student teaching log entry indicated her realization that she saw the ultimate decision rested on her own autonomous considerations, as teacher:

> The students were not entering into the language arts lesson as well as I had hoped. When I saw the students were getting restless, I should have changed the activity. Sometimes it is better to go with the students, rather than trying to swim against the current. One reason I kept on, was because I felt I needed to complete the activity in order to move on and be in sync with my plans. I see how it is better to cut a lesson short, and let it go for a few days in order to teach it well, rather than force it to happen. Even if some activities had to be cut this week, it would be o.k. Another reason I did not stop the lesson was because there were students who were cooperating, and the students had moments when they were still interested. I did not feel the students weren't interested, I felt they were just restless. I shouldn't have kept them on the carpet as long as I did, however. I've learned from this experience, even though it wasn't clear to me whether to switch or keep going.
> (3-STJ-9-2-April 19/95)

Marie monitored her own growth as a teacher by gauging her feelings of ease with her pupils. As she became more confident in her role as teacher, she reported becoming more student-centred:

> Today I was better able to relax with my students. They are beginning to adjust to my role as a teacher and I can trust them more. As I let go of that feeling of not wanting to lose control, I can enjoy the students more and become more focussed on them and less focussed on myself.
> (3-STL-6-4-April 12/95)

Marie also reflected on her considerations of an evolving personal style of teaching. Her growing confidence was evidenced as she was more able to accommodate the learning needs of her pupils on the basis of her decision making, as the classroom teacher:

> I am also beginning to develop my own style and rhythm to the day. I also find myself giving students a brief review of the day so they know what to expect as well as circulating more. Instead of gathering my students at the carpet for the novel I'm reading to them, I had them sit at their desks. I find it worked much better for me.
> (3-STL-17-5-May 1/95)

Harrison's reflections centred on his perceptions of feeling like a teacher through identifying and planning individualized instruction for specific pupils:

> I feel it is important to I.D. those students that are having difficulty in applying themselves fully so that I can find out how to motivate and equip them. I'm watching T., J., K. and M.
> (2-STL-2-4-March 28/95)

Dawn reflected on her growing abilities to simultaneously engage her pupils in an activity and use her observations as a form of informal assessment, what Goodman (1985) refers to as "kidwatching" (p. 9):

> Fox & Rabbit beanbag game was a hit--great filler--can see how the kids react in a game situation, U. got quite annoyed at other players who he thought were passing too slowly. It was interesting and informative to watch.
> (4-STL-21-3-May 3/95)

Dawn also indicated growing self-reliance in accessing and creating resources. As the teacher, she determined learner needs and made provision for skill reinforcement:

> I would like to make a centre using pocket charts & my contractions flashcards. That way they can practise what they've learned & those kids who need more practice get it. I'll look for more ideas in my head, books & other people.
> (4-STL-7-2-April 12/95)

Planning for teaching was seen as innovation on the part of the teacher:

> I've got a new idea for the flashcards--I'll try it tomorrow.
> (4-STL-19-2-May 2/95)

II. Self-doubts

The participants' prior knowing was used to assess their ongoing, and vacillating, considerations of becoming a teacher. They questioned their confidence, stamina, effectiveness and employment prospects based on their individual perspectives and circumstances. Marie, toward the end of seven weeks of student teaching, expressed her feelings of certainty in becoming a teacher:

> Sometimes I feel confident and other days I wonder if I really can do it. (3-STL-May 10/95)

A decision to pursue a fifth academic year of teacher education was seen as a relief for Marie, as she continued to question her prior knowing of the physical and mental stamina demanded by full-time teaching:

> Sometimes I wonder how I will last a year [full-time teaching] when I am so exhausted at this point. I know it will be a challenge for me to teach and plan at the same time, as well as to write report cards. I have heard that no amount of practicum experience can prepare someone for their first few years of teaching. Since 5th year is in my agenda, a job is not an immediate concern for me at this point, I know I will have to deal with it in the future.
> (3-STL-final entry, May 18/95)

Michelle shared her uncertainty at the prospect of student teaching for another month and her resulting resolve: ✓

> You know that feeling when you've made it so far then take a break and you don't know if you want to go back in! Well, I was feeling that way this morning. Why rock the boat?! I had done a bit of thinking over the weekend about how I am going to handle things for the next 4 weeks, and maybe I was feeling a little nervous.
> (6-STL-6-1-April 19/95)

Michelle additionally expressed doubts about her teaching effectiveness when she became aware of some pupils' inabilities to transfer what she had taught to other related learning situations:

> Some kids still concern me in science. I see that they are having difficulty transferring the info. into real life. One student didn't realize that fish have a backbone. Makes me question my teaching.
> (6-STL-8-2-April 26/95)

Stormi was limited in her scope of possible teaching locales by three school-aged children reluctant to relocate. She voiced her worries at the prospect of post-teacher certification unemployment:

> Number one concern, of course, is will I ever use all of this training? Will there be jobs out there for us?
> (5-final practicum reflection-May 11/95)

Michelle also expressed doubts about securing a teaching position in the same city, a situation necessitated by her husband's employment:

> My main concern now is obviously a job. So many questions run through my mind. I've always been in a position to pick jobs. If one firm didn't want my services there was always another one around the corner who did. But this is different. What if I don't get an interview with [the local school district]? What other avenues do I have open? How do I get a job ... just wait for them to call me? I feel like my hands are tied. Not a good feeling for me! On the other hand I am going to enjoy spending some "quality" time with my family. Hey who knows maybe I'll even start cooking again.
> (6-STL-final entry-May 9/95)

III. Confidence in a teaching future

Karen, Stormi and Michelle reflected on feeling unsure about securing teaching positions. Marie and Dawn had delayed immediate concerns about being hired based on decisions to enroll in a further year of teacher education. Harrison expressed confidence and excitement about embarking upon a teaching career. He was the only participant who did not express some trepidation or anxiety as to his future teaching prospects:

> I will be a good teacher. Actually, I will be a great teacher. And this is not so much because I am so well prepared or that I am just an all around great guy (though I would like to argue I am of course), it is simply because I will not give up and I know that there will always be much for me to learn. I will be learning from my mistakes up to retirement. I plan to approach my teaching career much like I have these past two years--with a confidence in my abilities and a mind open to correction and improvement from all corners. I am excited about teaching and I plan to let this excitement guide my learning.
> (2-STL-final entry, May/95)

Summary of Theme Number Five

Prior knowing transacted with current learning to provide the individualized lens through which the participants viewed their futures in the teaching profession. As the participants' final student teaching practicum unfolded, their considerations were reflective of the individual perspectives taken in the transformation from student teacher to soon-to-be certified teacher. Student teaching log entries, fieldnotes and post-observation discussions revealed a growing autonomy in the classroom, and a view of self as teacher, responsible for all aspects of classroom teaching and learning. A feeling of becoming a competent teacher was equated with 'knowing enough' to meet the myriad of tasks inherent in a teaching day. Being left on her own with her class, without her sponsor teacher's presence, contributed, for example, to Stormi's coming to know and view herself as the teacher. Positive teaching and learning interactions with the pupils reinforced prior knowing of feeling like a teacher. Identifying the needs of specific pupils and planning innovative activities reinforced previously held beliefs as to the role of a classroom teacher. Participant reflections revealed a growing sense of the notion of student-centred learning and the constant need to consider aspects of classroom interactions on the basis of prior knowing, infused with current moment-to-moment insights and new learning.

Self-doubts were woven through the participants' considerations. Effectiveness as a teacher, when some pupils were unable to demonstrate or transfer learning, was the impetus for reflection. Post-certification employment in the teaching field was a voiced concern by most of the participants, and particularly those who were unable to relocate geographically. Other doubts shared included the questioning of stamina and the questioning of self-confidence, both in terms of successfully completing the seven week practicum and in considering teaching as a full-time career.

Harrison exuded the most evident self-confidence in his future considerations as a teacher. He did not question whether or not he would be hired as a teacher but enthusiastically assumed a secure place in the teaching profession.

CHAPTER VI

CONNECTING CURRENT LEARNING WITH PRIOR KNOWING THROUGH WRITTEN REFLECTION

Reconsidering Reflection in Teacher Education

This chapter addresses the process of reconsideration of the professional year from the vantage points of the education student/student teacher/certified teachers and the researcher/language arts professor/practicum supervisor. Data gathered for the research study centred, for the most part, upon the written and spoken considerations of the participants. The language arts journals and student teaching logs were used as vehicles for reflective thought, to encourage the participants to connect current understandings with prior knowing in the contexts of the methodology course and the student teaching practicum classroom. The merits and drawbacks of written reflection are explored from two vantage points, as a teacher education student and as a teacher educator.

As a Teacher Education Student

At the time of the individual participant's post-education program interviews, thirteen months following their teacher certification, they were invited to share their perceptions of the reflective writing assignments. The participants' reconsiderations of reflection in the professional year of teacher education were strikingly different from each other and serve as a pointed reminder of the premise underlying a constructivist stance in teacher education: "an individual's prior experiences, mental structures, and beliefs bear upon how experiences are interpreted" (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 43).

Karen

Karen's reconsiderations of the journal writing requirements in the professional year of teacher education were summed up in one word--"frustration." Speaking not just for herself, but on behalf of her peers, Karen commented, "Journals are great in small doses. We over-reflected [in both the pre-professional and professional years] and found ourselves trying to think of anything to say."

The language arts journals were seen by Karen as "a chance to let you know where I was coming from as a person and I enjoyed your responses. It was sometimes difficult, though, if I needed more time just to think rather than putting it into words right away." In regard to the student teaching log requirement, Karen thought that it was a good idea, but the time constraints were terrible, adding yet one more daily demand to an already overcrowded seven week practicum. "The student teaching logs were sometimes just another extra thing to do. There just wasn't enough time some days to do it justice."

The extent of Karen's frustration was evident when she shared, "I'm a reflecter, anyway. I do a lot of soul-searching and self-analyze everything. Having to write it down just about sent me off the deep end."

Harrison

Harrison commented that he felt that:

> "journal writing was abused during the first year of the teacher education program. The whole year, every class and we were marked and assessed on this. I felt it was a waste of time, became a chore, trying to get something down. Other students felt like this too. It was hard when we weren't learning dramatic things, like in music, where I already have experience. It was easier when I was being challenged, was learning what challenged my beliefs and assumptions. Even during language arts, I felt sometimes like it was a waste of time."

Harrison said an option, in his point of view, would be to require so many journal entries per year, making the students accountable for writing on their own time.

Harrison commented that he found the student teaching journal writing "the most helpful and useful because the majority of learning was high stress." In his words, "it was good to sit down and write about what really went well, what could I change to make it better."

Marie

Marie said her present perspective on journal writing assignments during professional year was that it was:

> "valuable. It forced me to think about my learning. I can look back at my journals and see where I was and who I was in my heart and mind. It's sentimental now."

At the time, though, Marie found journal writing:

> "tedious. Other profs also wanted journal writing. When writing for marks, I write differently. 'Will it influence how she sees me?' I felt like I had to look like I had it all together. I didn't know you very well. My biggest concern was I didn't want you to know when I didn't know. It was my professional year and I needed to look like I had most of it together. I need to know it's okay to not know everything and that it's okay."

Dawn

Dawn remarked that she was required to write journals in many of her third year courses. Her first reaction to journal writing expectations in the professional year language arts methodology course was:

> "It's not meaningless, not boring but what's the purpose? What am I supposed to learn from this because I know what my thoughts are? But it helped me organize my thinking a lot better. I think journal writing is valuable. It makes you take a deeper look. You might write one sentence, then it forces you to think deeper. But initially, students think, 'Oh, brother, another journal'."

Dawn went on to comment that she found journal writing during class time distracting:

> "I'll have to finish at home. I had a bit more to say, but can't think when other people are talking. Everyone finishes at different times and its hard to focus."

Stormi

Stormi was brief and most forthcoming in her dislike of journal writing:

> "Number one, I hate journals. It wasn't the real me. I don't trust people, I've been hurt so many times. It doesn't reflect me. I would be thinking 'what does she want me to say?' We need to reflect back--after time, when something clicks. Maybe at Christmas and at the end of the year, reflect on blocks of time."

Michelle

Of the journal writing in professional year, Michelle commented:

> "At the time, there were days when I really appreciated doing it. I always have a lot of questions going through my head--nine times out of ten, the answer is within me. Writing it down gave me clarification--take a breath and you figure it out. Then some days, the rest of your life takes over and you feel like you don't have time to do it. Without a doubt, it's worthwhile, just so you know what it was you were thinking--emotions, frustration--anything that's happening in your life. It's a memory thing for me. It helps to gather your thoughts. Getting us to reflect has helped me--without that, I would have learned nothing. You did teach us to reflect."

As a substitute teacher, Michelle currently keeps a written reflective record of her day in each classroom:

> "I do it for myself, but leave it for the teacher. I feel good that I have written everything down."

As a Teacher Educator

Any attempt to scrutinize and improve one's own practice as a teacher educator is a venture into the unknown. My role, as a language arts methodology professor and practicum supervisor, has been enhanced, reduced and informed by the insights gleaned from my interactions with the six participants in the course of this research study. As stated in the introduction to the study, an ongoing and significant feature of my research was to utilize the findings to improve my own practice.

Doyle (1990) contends that a constructivist perspective is grounded in opportunities for reflection and emphasizes the "importance of direct experience and the gradual accumulation of knowledge structures from reflection on that experience over time" (p. 17). This is a pivotal point of awareness in my current considerations of reflection requirements assigned to education students. The language arts journals and student teaching logs were viewed with ambiguity by the participants. The findings of this study revealed three distinct factors discerned to hamper, rather than promote, the intended value of reflective writing:

1. overuse of journals in both the pre-professional and professional years of teacher education.

> We [education students] are being journalled to death.
> (anonymous comment on course evaluation, March, 1994)

Teacher educators in the professional program work in relative isolation in terms of their course delivery and assignments. Although many professors require that the students in their courses keep reflective journals, there has been no venue to actively explore the purpose of such assignments, as a faculty. As well, the terms 'reflection' and 'reflective practice', although seemingly laudable and universal goals for the teacher candidates, have become buzzwords (Killion and Todnem, 1991; Brookfield, 1995), "another teacher education fad" (Valli, 1992, p. viii), often used but not analyzed, and remain the nebulous intended outcome of mechanical reflection assignments.

The question of audience for the teacher education students' reflective writing remains unclear. The mere act of turning one's reflective thoughts over to a professor in return for marks changes the nature of the students' task. The participants' shared perceptions of being judged on the basis of their incomplete knowing and second guessing what they thought the professor wanted to see.

What is done with the reflective journals handed in? The research study undertaken attested to the reality that students' reflective writing required an in-depth level of analysis, if it was to inform the teacher educator's subsequent considerations. Otherwise, the handing in of reflective journals remained informative only in an episodic exchange between professor and student.

The participants' comments underscored a lack of understanding as to why they were assigned reflective journals. Some of the participants found meaning after completing the education program--Marie ultimately saw her writing as a sentimental reminder of her professional year, while Michelle found the habit of reflective writing helpful in her teacher-on-call employment. For the most part though, the participants voiced a confusion, even resentment, over the language arts journal assignments.

The student teaching logs, an education faculty assignment required of all professional year practicum students, is a vague, loosely interpreted assignment to both the student teachers and practicum supervisors. Faculty and temporarily employed supervisors are not unified as to the purpose, function or merits of reflective writing on practicum. The student teaching log was identified as particularly helpful by Harrison, as a way to reconsider his classroom teaching, incorporate new learning and plan for improvement in his subsequent instruction. The rest of the participants made no differentiation between the comparative value of language arts methodology and student teaching reflective writing.

2. reflection on demand

> My head is splitting apart, so I'm not functioning very well. Reflection is difficult when few brain cells are working. So please forgive me if I leave this for now--I'll try to come back to it later.
> (1-LAJ-33-1-Feb. 15/95)

The phrase 'reflection on demand', upon reconsideration as a teacher educator, seems to appropriately capture the nature of the reflective assignments in the professional year. Allocating the last ten minutes of the language arts methodology classes to reflective journal writing, although intended to provide time and a measure of importance, in essence denied the underlying tenet of reflection by using a prescriptive approach to encourage education students to deliberate about their learning and teaching. The participants' recollections spoke to containing reflective thought to the limited time allowed, frustrating at times due to feelings of having nothing insightful or profound to write. As well, Dawn made reference to the context, distracting due to her peers finishing early and ambient classroom noise. Although the option of additional reflective journal writing outside of class time was presented as an option, with the exception of one Saturday morning entry by Karen, it was seldom exercised. Harrison, during the first term of the language arts course, rewrote his journal entries on his computer.

The student teaching logs were also seen as 'reflection on demand', because the reflective writing was a daily prescription. The professional year students and practicum supervisors did not share common understanding of the nature, or purpose, of reflective writing, but were left to interpret this assignment on their own.

3. reflection in isolation

> Not much to reflect on.
> (6-STL-17-1-May 9/95)

The participants' considerations of the professional year, in retrospect, were situated in contexts which isolated them from the knowing of others. The language arts journal entries were written in a classroom atmosphere of relative quiet, suggesting that reflection is a solo task. The student teaching logs were also isolating in nature, often written at home or in an empty classroom at the end of the teaching day. In contrast to reflection in isolation, Oja, Diller, Corcoran and Andrew (1992) stress the need for education students to be a part of "functional groupings for support and shared reflection" (p. 22), which begin in the university classroom setting and continue through the practicum experience. Such groups are not limited to education students alone but include professors, practicum supervisors, sponsor teachers, and teachers in the field.

The thematic analysis of the professional year experiences of the participants revealed a broad scope of prior knowing brought to teacher education, as well as a wide variety of current learning prompted by differing experiences. Reflection in isolation, in effect, overlooked the potential of the participants to engage in learning based on the experiences of significant others. Stormi's less than optimal interactions with two parents of pupils were indicative of experiences that could be further explored, to the learning benefit of fellow student teachers, sponsor teachers, university supervisor and Stormi, herself. Reflecting in isolation precluded the possibilities of the dynamics of support and input from a variety of perspectives.

Summary

The participants' perspectives on the reflective writing required in the professional year were, at best, ambiguous. Comments that journal writing was abused, tedious, without purpose, even hated, were countered with descriptors such as valuable and worthwhile. The issue of marks being assigned to reflective writing was viewed negatively. The participants also expressed a wariness of the reflective assignments, tentative that their prior knowing might be viewed as inadequate. Two participants also expressed the opinion that the education students themselves would be the best judges of when to reflect.

Reflective writing was, for the purposes of this study, considered to be an opportunity to investigate the participants' integration of prior knowing and current learning in the professional year. As a teacher educator, three factors were found to be problematic in reconsidering the participants' experiences with reflection. Overuse of journal writing by education program faculty, reflection on demand, and reflection in isolation were determined to be elements which made the reflective writing assignments less than optimal.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This research study considered and reconsidered the transactions of prior knowing and current learning as experienced by six professional year education students. An analysis of the data revealed five themes. Each theme illuminated a particular aspect of how meaning was constructed with reference to prior knowing, in the contexts of the language arts methodology course and in the practicum classroom. A final interview with each participant allowed an opportunity to reconsider the professional year, now from the vantage point of a certified teacher.

The first purpose of this chapter is to reconsider the research questions and, in so doing, provide a summary of the research findings. The second purpose of the chapter is to present suggestions for the field of teacher education and research, grounded in the findings of this study.

Reconsidering the Research Questions: A Summary of the Research Findings

1. What aspects of the participants' prior knowing were considered to be personally relevant, as current learning in a language arts methodology class took place?

The thematic analysis of the participants' language arts journals revealed insights into the ongoing transaction of prior knowing and current learning in the context of a year long methodology course. The personal relevance of each participant's prior knowing showed wide variations--reflective of the individual beliefs and assumptions brought with them to the professional year in teacher education.

All of the participants looked to prior knowing based on past experiences. Vivid memories of being elementary school students, themselves, prompted a critical comparison between how they were taught and the current language arts theory and methodology presented in lectures. For the most part, the participants recalled language arts as a decontextualized school subject, rife with rote learning and isolated application of skills in worksheet exercises. Reading materials were recounted as unmotivating or too difficult.

Positive memories, though not as frequent, were forthcoming when current learning was found to be congruent with past recall. Familiarity with a currently presented practice served to reinforce the participants' prior knowing and future teaching intentions. Being read to by the professor overwhelmingly affirmed their past and present enjoyment of this classroom experience.

The participants who were the parents of school-aged children brought a body of associated prior knowing to the language arts methodology lectures. Current learning was related to their own children's experiences and reinforced language arts theory and projected classroom application. The parents also displayed a degree of confident familiarity as new topics were presented in the course. The parent of a pre-schooler also indicated that her current learning was applied in the home.

The pre-professional year, two week student teaching practicum provided a source of prior knowing about classroom practice. Previous student teaching, and recall of their sponsor teachers' practices, were considered in retrospect. In this case, current learning provided a level of understanding for past experiences. The participants turned only infrequently to this first classroom experience in their constructions of new meaning. Observational visits to their two professional year practicum classrooms were seen as a more immediately available context for assessing and applying prior knowing and current learning.

The second aspect of the participants' prior knowing considered to be personally relevant in the language arts class was their considerations of how they made new language arts learning meaningful for themselves, based on their prior knowing of self as learner. The process of integrating what is new with what is already, however tentatively, known was revealed as the participants reflected on their appreciation for experiential participation and collaborations with their peers in language arts lectures. Peers were considered to be valued co-learners as they shared their prior knowing in the process of collegial meaning making.

Factors which helped the participants to accommodate new learning into their existing constructs were modelling of teaching by the professor, opportunities to examine language arts materials from the real world of the classroom, and applying current learning to their projected, or recalled, teaching of children. Factors which impeded the integration of prior knowing and current learning in the methodology course were identified by the participants as having too little time, feeling that their prior knowing would not be sufficient to meet the demands of actual classroom teaching, being unsure about their success in meeting course expectations, and nebulous understanding of language arts concepts. As the participants processed new meanings on the foundation of their prior knowing, they expressed instances of being surprised at new learning. This surprise came about in situations where the participants found previously held assumptions inadequate in the light of current learning.

Preparations for practicum teaching became a central consideration for the participants, especially as weekly visits to their assigned classrooms were underway. They now brought prior knowing of their individual classrooms and pupils to the methodology lectures and became increasingly focussed and discerning as to the language arts methodology being taught. From a constructivist perspective, the participants constructed new language arts meaning based on their personal lens of practicum teaching requirements. Congruence of methodology theory and observed classroom practice reinforced the participants' anticipation of student teaching. Conversely, discovering a lack of congruence was the cause of concern, prompting the participants to question the adequacy of their prior knowing relative to practicum requirements and preparations.

Language arts theory, as presented in course lectures, was considered by the participants to augment and supplement their existing prior knowing. Their reflections on the various language arts topics indicated the individuality of meaning construction--what was new learning for one was already familiar to another.

2. What aspects of the participants' prior knowing were considered to be personally relevant, as a final teaching practicum unfolded?

As the participants engaged in their final practicum experience, it was evident, for the most part, that their prior knowing was more than sufficient in meeting the challenges of daily teaching. Thorough teaching preparations, conscientious lesson delivery, and a sincere regard for their pupils were in evidence in each participant's classroom. When their assumptions, as teachers, were fulfilled on the basis of their prior knowing, the participants' teaching was observed to be skillful, effective and personally rewarding. New learning about the nuances of teaching, and subtle refinements, were smoothly integrated into their prior knowing.

Assumptions taken into the classroom based on prior knowing, however, were also the source of discord and disappointment for the participants. An assumption that daily teaching and preparations for teaching would be a measured and time-limited activity was challenged as the participants realized the mental and physical stamina demanded, as well as the all-encompassing and ongoing need for continuous adaptation, revision and replanning of lessons to be taught. Classroom management difficulties revealed an assumption that carefully prepared lessons would motivate and engage all of the pupils. The participants also assumed uninterrupted teaching days and were disconcerted as they discovered the seemingly constant disruptions to their teaching plans. Although their peers played a significant role in the participants' considerations of prior and new learning during the academic year, their acknowledgement of the significance of the prior learning of others switched abruptly as practicum teaching commenced. The prior knowing of sponsor teachers and other school staff members was held in high regard and accorded a status of insight based upon their greater experience in teaching. The practicum supervisor's role was assumed to be one of support, but also as an instigator of changes needed and ultimate author of the final practicum report. Interactions with parents and substitute teachers were indicative of a lack of situational knowing.

Although student teachers are expected to perform the duties of full-time teachers, they were not always afforded the respect that a professional peer would command. Their prior knowing, and assumptions as to their place in the school, was on occasion disregarded by those with more power. Everett-Turner (1985) speaks to the mixed messages given and received, as to the role of education students, both within the education program and in the practicum classroom. Her reference to "fitting into another teacher's existing framework" speaks to the likelihood of clashing assumptions:

> Although the Bachelor of Education program is designed to prepare beginning teachers for this role [eventual full time teaching], it may tend to relegate them to the role of student throughout the [program] years. Even field placement, which is intended to provide practical experience for being a teacher, requires her [sic] to fit into another teacher's existing framework and teach in an "acceptable" (to the

> teacher and faculty consultant) way if she is to get an acceptable report (p. 311).

Concurrent with their final student teaching assignment, the participants used their prior knowing to envision themselves as practicing teachers. They were aware of those aspects of classroom teaching which contributed to "feeling like the teacher" and also to incidents which made them question their abilities and effectiveness as a teacher. Only one participant expressed an unquestioning confidence in securing a teaching position. The other participants were less certain that they would find employment as a teacher, when they sought it.

3. How can methodology instruction encourage education students to connect current learning with their prior knowing?

Reflective writing is generally seen as a method of making education students' considerations visible, both to themselves and to the professor. My views on reflection in teacher education have been altered, and modified, by the findings of this research study. Reflection is in danger of becoming a buzzword, an unexamined education practice. At the other end of the spectrum, reflection, the process of deliberating upon one's thoughts and actions as a way to inform subsequent meaning making, holds promise as a process through which education students can be involved and invited to examine assumptions and beliefs brought to education. This research study, though, uncovered three factors which impeded reflective thought by the participants. The overuse of reflective journal writing within the education program, reflection on demand, and reflection in isolation all were seen as contributing to reducing the effectiveness of encouraging reflection in teacher education. The participants' recall of the reflective writing required during their teacher education program was overwhelmingly negative.

The participants expressed strong views on the journal writing requirements of their professional year. Feelings of doubtfulness, even resentment, were tempered with more moderated opinions that the reflective assignments were worthwhile and helpful. Individual participants sometimes voiced both polarities in the same response.

Reflection in the teacher education program has been reduced to journal writing as the sole venue. Teacher educators and the education students alike would seem to share a nebulous understanding of the intents or value of such assignments.

4. What commonalities and differences existed among the prior knowing and considerations of current learning, of the participants, that will inform teacher education?

Commonalities

The participants' individual prior knowing, as it was brought to transact with new learning in the professional year, shared common ground with the prior knowing of others. Prior knowing is seen as the basis for assumptions brought to teacher education. This prior knowing also became the lens through which new learning was assimilated and accommodated.

The participants were critical of their own language arts instruction as school pupils. They shared an optimism that informed language arts instruction could be meaningful to, and engaging for, their future pupils.

The participants also shared the perspective that limited time and time pressures in the professional year combined to make their considerations of prior knowing and meaning making counter-productive. Their professional year learning was often portrayed as taking place in a rushed environment, with multiple expectations vying for a limited amount of time.

A high regard for their peers, as supportive co-learners and sources of experiential knowing, was evident throughout the academic year. Within the university setting, modelling of current learning by the language arts professor, as well as active participation in lectures and peer activities were found to be helpful in accessing the prior knowing of others in the class.

Once on practicum, commonly shared and unquestioned assumptions resulted in classroom management difficulties, interrupted teaching schedules, and realizing the demanding nature of a teaching career.

Finally, an ambivalence towards journal writing was a commonality shared by the participants, both in the contexts of the methodology course and during the final practicum.

Differences

The participants differed markedly in the life experiences brought to teacher education. The six participants in the research study ranged in age from their early twenties to their early forties. Each teacher candidate brought to the program an individualized background based on prior knowing, grounded in previous school experiences, experiences with school-aged children, and beliefs about teaching and themselves as future teachers. The function of being a parent appeared to give those participants an informed perspective on some aspects of the language arts as presently taught in the elementary schools.

The participants' compatibility with their sponsor teachers was a second area of marked differences. Assumptions, based on prior knowing, as to the relationship of the two roles were found to vary. A consideration of the etymology of the word compatible: < L *com* together + *pati* to feel, suffer (Avis, 1974, p. 275), suggests a shared view of classroom life, as well as an expectation of support.

The process of matching student teachers with sponsor teachers is, however, a mechanical process focussed primarily on the education student's geographic locale and ensuring their exposure to a cross-section of grade levels in the course of the education program. Guyton and McIntyre (1990) charge that

> all too often, models for student teaching and school experiences are developed out of convenience or tradition. Often little thought is given to the most powerful or effective means for linking campus and field-based programs or for reinforcing the goals of the teacher education program while students are practicing their craft in the schools (p. 517).

Potential compatibility remains an unknown entity until actual classroom observational visits and practicum teaching are underway. Karen's potential compatibility with her sponsor teacher was undermined by his unplanned absences from school and his duties as a school administrator. Her strengths as a student teacher were evident as she coped, and thrived, though left very much on her own. The situation, however, raises the concern of how a student teacher needing more support would fare in a similar situation. Harrison developed a working, but distant, relationship with his sponsor. He made no reference to his sponsor teacher, in any regard, in his student teaching log or our audio-taped post teaching discussions. Dawn alluded to an absence of perceived compatibility with her sponsor when she wrote:

> Although this wasn't the practicum made in heaven, I can honestly say I truly enjoyed the children & that was what kept me going, as well as your support. (4-STL-26-3-May 11/96)

The confidence of the participants in securing a future teaching position was a final area of difference. A feeling of possessing enough knowing to enter the professional arena was seen as contributing to these considerations.

Reconsidering the Research Findings: Implications for Teacher Education

Reflection in the teacher education program

Teacher educators must identify their purposes for assigning reflective writing assignments and share the intent with the students. Teacher educators must be open to examining their own assumptions when assigning reflective journal writing to students, otherwise a merely mechanical approach reinforces the vagueness of the terms reflection and reflective practice. The year-to-year assignment of student teaching logs illustrates the ease with which teacher educators complacently succumb, perpetuating questionable practice. Reflection on demand and reflection in isolation were identified in this study as approaches which undermined the intended purposes of the assignments.

The concepts which underlie the terms reflection and reflective practice, to avoid their reduction to buzzwords, are in need of clarification. All those involved in the teacher education program--education students, professors, sponsor teachers and practicum supervisors--would benefit from a common understanding of the program's goals in relation to the graduation of reflective practitioners.

The edification of reflection by teacher education students would be promoted by education faculty sharing with each other their assignments in journal writing in the academic terms. It is emphatically suggested that faculty make reflection a feature of the entire program and that this component be consistent from course to course. Areas of commonality might form the basis for collaboration which overlaps two or more curricular courses. Education faculty members might attempt unity in the teacher education programs by exploring the arena of critical reflection and finding agreement on some of the more global issues facing education in the 1990's and beyond. Issues might be addressed in the education courses and become the focal point of journal reflection from the discrete curricular vantage points.

Marks and grades assigned to the reflections of education students remain a contentious and unresolved topic. A set percentage of the final grade, for example a guaranteed ten percent set aside for engaging in the reflective assignments, is a compromise that meets the needs of both teacher educators and education students. By apportioning a contribution to the final grade, the professor signals an apparent measure of value to the reflection assignments.

The question of audience for their reflective writing is confusing to education students. Being perceived as not knowing enough or attempts to second guess what the professor wants to read are counter-productive. The education students must be the first and foremost audience for their own reflections.

As teacher educators, it is essential that we expand our self-imposed and narrow views of reflection equated only to journal writing. Another venue to encourage reflection among teacher education students might include peer interactions, valuable for being exposed to the prior knowing and meaning making of others.

The methodology course

The critical influence of prior knowing brought to the methodology classrooms in teacher education is an important consideration in planning our instruction as professors. An acknowledgement of, and respect for, the prior knowing brought to teacher education is a vital initial step in encouraging the future teachers to examine their assumptions and beliefs. An understanding that prior knowing influences subsequent learning is germane to our questioning of relying too heavily, or solely, upon a transmission model of instruction.

It would be of benefit to establish closer ties with the language arts students' practicum placement classrooms during their half day observations. An effort to link a specific observational focus with current methodology content would provide a basis for discussion among students, helpful in allowing for a comparison of experiences and benefitting from the experiences and input of peers. A closer communication between methodology professors and classroom teachers would serve to alert the sponsors to new theory and practice or reinforce the mutuality of existing theory and practice.

The findings of the research reinforce the need for education students' active involvement in their own knowledge construction, rather than as passive recipients of transmitted knowledge. Peer interactions were found to enhance the process of meaning-making.

As evidenced by the results of the research, the professional year busyness contributes to the perception of a time-pressured, hurried atmosphere. The findings suggest a need for heightened awareness, by education professors, that a 'rushed' feeling interferes with the education students' construction of new meaning and may, in fact, obliterate teaching intent.

The research outcomes reinforce the importance of modelling for education students the concepts, skills, strategies, and attitudes to enhance the translation of theory into classroom practice in the teaching of language arts.

As the research findings indicate, classroom management was the source of ongoing concern and needs to be addressed as part of each education program course. A suggested process would be to ground the new learning of effective management strategies in case studies and scenarios from weekly observational visits to practicum classrooms. An alternative manner to address this obvious need would be to offer a separate course, or seminars, which focus on classroom management.

The practicum experience

During the course of this research study, I was prompted to question several accepted practices that thwart, rather than augment, the student teaching practicum experiences of education students.

Sponsor teacher recruitment offers potential as a means of establishing closer ties between the education department and the school-based professionals. Especially questioned, on the basis of this study, is the suitability of administrators to assume a sponsor teacher role. Busy and conflicting schedules due to administrative responsibilities resulted in these sponsor teachers not being available for consistent observation of student teaching or to give feedback and support through mentorship. Findings from this study point to an unacceptable variation in the sponsor teacher role. In order to provide the most effective practicum experience, special recognition of sponsors identified for their excellence in mentoring student teachers might be an education program priority, either to be a sponsor teacher in future practicum assignments or as a faculty resource to mentor new sponsor teachers.

Student teaching cohorts, placed within the same school and assigned to the same supervisor, would be given the same half-day each week, to meet with the supervisor, while the sponsor teacher resumes responsibility for the class. Set aside as a time for group considerations and reflections, possible formats might include among many possibilities the discussion of a common topic related to the practicum teaching experience, a case study approach to sharing and examining actual classroom scenarios, considering questions arising from teaching, and atypical and idiosyncratic concerns. Such an approach would provide the continuity of valued peer support, found in this study to be abruptly discontinued with the onset of practicum, and encourage a sense of continuing knowledge construction. As well, this approach reduces the time needed to travel between schools, making more efficient use of limited supervision time on the part of the university supervisor.

Practicum supervisors should be instrumental in encouraging reflection on classroom teaching. This demands faculty input into the goals for reflection within the education program. Alternatives to student teaching logs as a vehicle for reflection, along with other unexamined approaches need to be explored with teacher education colleagues.

It is important that student teachers not be isolated, as the single practicum student assigned to a school. This practice allows no opportunity to share aspects of the practicum experience with other novices. Student teachers need the opportunities to continue to learn and construct meaning with the support and input of their peers.

The presence of student teachers in a given school can serve to heighten the professional sensitivity of the total school staff. The student teacher should be regarded as a teacher in the school, and their practicum experience seen as an opportunity to interact with many of the teachers on staff, not as the responsibility of the sponsor teacher alone. School-based professionals are valuable sources of in-school support, guidance and modelling in dealing, for example, with the concerns of parents of pupils.

Clearly established guidelines for the role of a substitute teacher in the practicum classroom is in need of clarification and agreement between the schools and the education program.

Concluding Remarks

> Interpretation is the conceptual working out of preexistent understanding, coming to know what we "knew" already, albeit obscurely. (Pinar & Reynolds, 1992, p. 7)

Any attempt to scrutinize and improve one's own practice as a teacher educator is a venture into the unknown. My role, as a language arts methodology professor, has been enhanced, reduced and informed by the insights gleaned from my interactions with the six participants in the course of this research study. As stated in the introduction to the study, an ongoing and significant feature of my research was to utilize the findings to improve my own practice.

The notion of constructivism, that the learner actively interprets new learning and constructs meaning in order to make sense of phenomena encountered, has been a pivotal point of insight. Prior to the study, I was aware of the literature on the impact of prior experiences but am now cognizant of the power of experiences that pre-date enrollment in a teacher education program. Given that the life experiences and belief systems of thirty students individually interact with new learning in the context of each language arts methodology lecture, what each student takes away and the value they place upon the knowledge from any given class remains, for the most part, an unknown entity.

In retrospect, my memories of being astounded at the heterogeneous mix of education students in my initial experiences as a sessional instructor of language arts methodology have never abated, as I first meet each new class of students. Working with the participants in the continuum of their professional year in teacher education has reinforced my belief that the individual's talents, strengths, questioning, optimism and doubts are all legitimate entities in the process of becoming a teacher. Education students are not a *tabula rasa* (van Manen, 1991, p. 34). Though this statement may appear self-evident, too simplistic, there is a tendency to approach the instruction of education students as though they were beginners in all aspects of teacher education. Given the hurried atmosphere of the professional year and the practicum-driven nature of the students' preparations for actual classroom teaching, it is tempting to revert to a transmission model of course delivery.

An ongoing personal challenge for me, as a teacher educator, is to honor the tenets of a constructivist process of meaning making--a conscious awareness that each education student is viewing their new learning through the lens of past experiences and tacit knowing. Making time, making room, for the prior knowing of each student remains a challenge but not an obstacle. The sharing of prior knowing contributes to a community of learners constructing meaning in a supportive, collegial environment.

In reconsidering the journal and log writing requirements in the professional year, it is in fact this sharing that is absent. The journals and logs represent only a limited written dialogue between education student and professor/practicum supervisor. The formation of a true community of learners is compromised by limited acknowledgement, and limited exposure, to the relevant prior knowing and beliefs of their peers. The unique and common experiences of individuals serve as a bridge to commonalities and communication among all voices in the class and in the classrooms.

Knowledge of one's own understanding of personal meaning making can serve to enhance future interactions with the pupils in classrooms. Perhaps in this regard, teacher educators can serve as influential role models, demonstrating through our fidelity to education that we care, and that we "demonstrate, in our own teaching, how teachers convey their caring" (Noddings, 1986, p. 503). My notions of the ethics of caring and fidelity have been enhanced through the research process. Fox (1993) suggests "I care about" and "I remember..." as possible avenues for encouraging the sharing of prior knowing by teacher education students (p. 37).

Suggestions for Related Research

Three topics related to this research study are suggested as avenues worthy of further naturalistic inquiry. Firstly, the nature of reflection as interpreted by the field of teacher education and teacher educators is particularly timely, given the popularity and growing vagueness of such terms as reflective teacher and reflective practice. The identification of conditions that foster reflection on the part of education students might include the exploration of peer and practicum groupings as settings for interactive exchanges with others.

A second related research topic centres on an inquiry into the practicum-based relationships that develop in the school setting as student teachers enter their classrooms. Sponsor teacher and student teacher compatibility is a research area that holds promise for offering insight into recruitment practices. Accessing the prior knowing of others, while identified as a major theme in this research study, holds promise as an independent, in-depth investigation.

Thirdly, research which explores the stakeholders' perceptions of time in the professional year would offer the field of teacher education a thoughtful insight into alleviating disparate and often conflicting demands for limited time.

CHAPTER VIII

A POSTSCRIPT

The relationship which developed between myself, as researcher, and each of the six participants was marked by a mutual trust and a respect for each other's endeavors in the field of education. The participants were, without exception, forthcoming and generous with their sharing of their experiences, both during and following their professional year in teacher education.

At the time of our post-teacher certification interviews, thirteen months after they had received teacher certification, the participants had begun to find, and continued to seek, their rightful places in the teaching profession. Karen, Michelle and Stormi, the participants who were also parents, limited their search for teaching positions to the immediate geographic locale in which they lived. Spousal employment and their children's established school placements were cited as overriding considerations.

All the participants, with the exception of Karen, pursued either full-time or part-time fifth year teacher education studies in the year following their teacher certification. Dawn, Marie and Stormi returned to university to complete their fifth year of teacher education, each selecting a specific area of curricular specialization. Stormi remained in the same city, while Dawn and Marie relocated to a university in a larger city in the same province.

Harrison secured a full-time elementary classroom teaching position and relocated to a smaller city in the same province.

Michelle and Karen were both hired as teachers-on-call [substitute teachers] with the local school district. Marie also was a teacher-on-call for a short period of time.

Following is a synopsis of each participant's post-professional year teaching and educational pursuits.

Karen

Following her teacher certification, Karen was interviewed and hired as a teacher-on-call with the local school district. Her first substitute teaching position was for three and one-half weeks at the beginning of the school year and she was soon "subbing full-time" in a variety of elementary schools. In mid-February, Karen was assigned to a long term substitute teacher appointment in a grade six classroom.

Working as a teacher on call, Karen realized the added demands and stresses of being seen as a temporary presence in the classrooms and referring to the prior knowing she now took into this position she commented, "I don't think anyone could prepare you for the meanness I have encountered."
(1-FI-June 18/95)

Harrison

Upon receiving his teacher certification, Harrison enrolled in, and completed, spring and summer courses towards his Bachelor of Education degree. During the spring session, he applied for, and was offered, a teaching position in a small city in the interior of British Columbia. Harrison taught a split grade 4 and 5 class, and also taught language arts for one hour a day to French immersion students, a trade-off in place of teaching French as a second language to his home room class. During our phone interview, Harrison was enthusiastic about his teaching career, commenting that he "can't imagine doing anything else" and that he "wakes up everyday, happy to be doing what I am."

Reflecting back on his first year of teaching, Harrison recalled many late nights as he prepared for his teaching days. He felt "unprepared" for the demands of teaching, in addition to establishing classroom management and implementing daily routines and teacher expectations. Marking student work was an area Harrison found overwhelming at the outset of his first year of teaching. Having students correct some of their own work and self-assessment with Harrison and individual students made the assessment process easier as the school year progressed.

When asked about his spelling, Harrison commented that it was "much better." He still had problems spelling spontaneously in time-pressured situations, but when unsure he, or a student, consulted a dictionary.

During the summer following his first year teaching, Harrison planned to teach computer courses in a school-aged summer program, offered through the city's continuing education summer program.

(2-FI-long distance phone call, June 28/95)

Marie

In the year following her teacher certification, Marie worked for the summer at a job unrelated to teaching. That fall, she enrolled in a fifth year, degree completion program in another university, where she specialized in music education. The strong musical background brought with her to the teacher education program, combined with her successful integration of music into many aspects of her final practicum, prompted Marie to realize that "music is a tool which touched a part of the students--maybe their hearts and souls." She saw music as a valuable transition strategy when teaching students, "to calm them down, perk them up."

Marie's fifth year studies were completed in the year following her teacher certification and she graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree with a concentration in music. Returning home, she became a teacher on call, was "called regularly", and took her guitar to the classrooms in which she substitute taught.

During this time, she applied for and was offered two permanent teaching positions. She had accepted a position as a grade one teacher in a small city at the time of our post-program interview. The prospect of a full-time teaching position left Marie "excited and nervous." She mused that "no [education] program can prepare you for the unexpected." Of particular concern to Marie was the prospect of dealing with the parents of her first class of students. Despite her elation, not knowing enough was a source of trepidation. She feared parental perceptions of "she's a first year teacher, doesn't know what she's doing, incompetent."
(3-FI- June 21/96).

Dawn

Dawn completed her Bachelor of Education degree with a concentration in remedial methodology at another university in the province in the year following her teacher certification. The year of studies gave Dawn "self-confidence. I learned not to doubt myself. During fifth year, it all came together--I knew more than I thought." She returned to her home city and worked in the retail sector, a part-time position of twenty-eight hours per week. She volunteered as a tutor for a female immigrant, two hours per week. Dawn "made up her own curriculum--spelling, writing, reading" and worked with her client until she moved out of the city in the spring.

At the time of our final interview, Dawn had applied for teaching positions with a number of school districts and was "waiting to see. I'm more optimistic than I used to be and hoping to walk into a full-time teaching job."
(4-FI-July 5/95)

Stormi

Immediately upon completion of her final practicum and teacher certification, Stormi enrolled in spring, summer and fall/winter courses and completed the requirements for her Bachelor of Education degree. From the fall of the year until Christmas, Stormi worked as a local school volunteer and coached her elementary school-aged daughter's volleyball team. After Christmas, with one less university class on her agenda, Stormi volunteered full-time two days per week in a grade two class, and two full days per week in a second school, as a learning assistance aide/volunteer.

At the time of our interview, Stormi had designed a summer program offering, "Computer Fun" for ages six though 12 in their own homes, and had put up posters in the city. Two students were signed up, thus far. Stormi had also applied for a teaching position in the local school district and with an independent learning centre but had "no real leads as yet."
(5-FI-June 27/96)

Michelle

Michelle attended summer session upon receiving her teacher certification. She applied to the local school district and was short-listed for a temporary teaching position. Although she went to the interview prepared with a year-long teaching plan, the principal "went with the experienced" candidate. Confident, nonetheless, that she would receive regular teaching work as a teacher-on-call, she did not get this opportunity "until the end of October." She continued to take courses, offered in the evenings, to complete her Bachelor of Education degree. During the day, she volunteered in a school in which she was known, but found this situation difficult when she saw education program peers, now employed with the school district "in the staff room--as teachers or teacher-on-call." During this time, Michelle participated in the professional development offerings of the school in which she volunteered and updated her resume. Describing herself as "very upset", she returned to the "very influential principal" who had originally interviewed her for the temporary teaching position. He intervened on her behalf with a phone call to personnel, and Michelle was interviewed as a potential teacher-on-call. She described her feelings at the time as “awful”, intimidated. Four years of teacher education. If I didn't get a teaching job, I had to get another job."

Michelle was offered a position as a teacher-on-call "the next day and I've been working ever since." She finds that being a substitute teacher "fits with having a pre-school child" and is working on courses to complete her education degree.
(6-FI-June 30/95)

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time.
> (Eliot, 1972, p. 897)

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